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PAYING FOR THE GIFT OF EDUCATION:
A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE INTOWN ACADEMY OF ATLANTA

by

SCOTT NESBIT

Under the direction of Susan Talburt

ABSTRACT:

In my critical discourse analysis of The Intown Academy's (TIA) various documents and media—including the school's charter petition, charter, Parent-Student Handbook, and website—I articulate the school's subjectifying narratives and analyze how these narratives function to (re)produce particular subjects according to tropes of threat/crisis, opportunity, corporate/non-profit benevolence, and personal responsibility. Identifying these subjects, I analyze how they are effected/affected by the practice of education at TIA. To this end, I examine the various practices of school discipline codified in the Parent and Student Contracts in TIA's 2012-2013 Parent Student Handbook, including mandates for the wearing of school uniforms, volunteer labor, and reorientations of the family and the private space of the home. I conclude that TIA discursively produces indebted subjects whose educational and economic survival depends on the reorientation of their lives in service to the school.

INDEX WORDS: Atlanta Public Schools, Charter schools, US Public Education, Neoliberalism, Philanthropy, School uniforms, Old Fourth Ward, Gentrification

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SCOTT NESBIT

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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1 LOCATING THE INTOWN ACADEMY IN THE DISCOURSE(S) OF CONTEMPORARY US EDUCATION REFORM

1.1 Introduction

On the stormy morning of November 6, 2012, a line of people—bundled against the cold and huddled beneath umbrellas—waited in Perkerson Park for their chance to cast a ballot in the presidential election. Situated in the heart of one of Atlanta’s historical black neighborhoods, Capitol View, Perkerson Park is a Roosevelt-era park comprised of a large tract of rolling hills, playgrounds and baseball fields. As I waited in line, I noted the disparity between this relatively sullen morning and that of the presidential election in 2008, when so many people were animated by “hope.” Aside from the significant fact that Barack Obama, a black man, had been elected president and could potentially be re-elected, the devastation of war and the neoliberal eradication of social programs had only increased under his watch. The enervating promise of “change” had withered into resignation, a tired confirmation of business as usual: “four more years.” The American military persisted in the expansion of its illegal imperial projects, Southwest Atlantans remained underserved and disproportionately incarcerated, and private corporations profited. The unrelenting rain chattered on the umbrellas furiously, driving the cold beneath our coats.

Inside, the Perkerson Park Community Center was warm and brightly lit. Where “hope” and “change” proffered little warmth, there was at least a moment of solace from the elements. Having cast their vote for president, Georgians were asked to vote on Amendment One, which “Provides for improving student achievement and parental involvement through more public charter school options” (House Resolution No. 1162 Ga. L. 2012, p. 1364). In a state whose capital city had recently been devastated by the revelation of the Criterion-Referenced

Competency Tests (CRCT) cheating scandal—which further solidified the ignominious stature of Georgia’s education system as a national pariah—improving student achievement and parent involvement might seem an unassailable, if not desperately needed, provision.¹ However, what the ballot did not clearly state was that Amendment One provides more charter school options by amending the state constitution to provide for the creation of a state-appointed (read: unelected) commission which will be authorized to approve charters—schools that are privately owned and operated, but publicly funded—without the approval of local school boards.

According to the Georgia Charter Schools Association (GCSA), in 2008 there were 113 charter schools statewide. Of these 122 charter schools, 106 were approved by state and local school boards.² Appointed by lawmakers in 2008, the Georgia Charter School Commission (GCSC) approved 16 additional charter schools for funding by both state and local tax dollars despite objections by local school boards. These approvals violated Georgia state law, which stipulated that charters approved at the state level and denied locally could only receive state and federal funding. In May 2011, the GCSC and the schools it approved were ruled unconstitutional by the Georgia Supreme Court.³ Amendment One subverts the Georgia Supreme Court’s ruling by altering the state constitution in favor of a powerful commission free from democratic oversight and prone to private economic influences. This amendment is of national significance for a variety of reasons, the most explicit of which is that the amendment juridically codifies the siphoning of desperately needed public tax-dollars into the coffers of private corporations (who will own school-buildings and all school property including buildings and outlying structures), setting a precedent for such alteration of other states’ education and private property laws.⁴ In doing so, Amendment One facilitates the privatization of public education by imbricating private transnational economic interests with state power while

drastically reducing oversight, yielding an education-industrial complex beyond the immediate grasp of the voting public.

One local example of the imbrication of educational praxis with private, transnational corporate interests is The Intown Academy (TIA), a charter school in downtown Atlanta that is owned and operated by EdisonLearning (sic). EdisonLearning is the new moniker for the recently rebranded Edison Schools, Inc., an education management corporation whose financial stability crumbled after its most noteworthy projects—such as the revitalization of Philadelphia Public Schools—failed to materialize.⁵ The "new" corporation, EdisonLearning, is currently operating schools in the US, the UK, and the UAE.⁶ Edison Schools' founder, Chris Whittle, was a pioneer in the privatization of public education who imagined the captive audience of students in public schools as a fecund site of advertising revenue. Finding success in the 1980s with his Channel One classroom "news" program which aired commercials for Snickers, Levi's, and Head & Shoulders, Whittle broadened his sights to education management.⁷ Edison Schools, Inc. was founded in 1992 and led by a highly influential team of neo-conservative businessmen, politicians, and political scientists, amongst them Chester E. Finn, Jr., the former Assistant Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush; Tom Ingram, who served as the Chief of Staff to Lamar Alexander, the former US Secretary of Education; and John Chubb, a fellow of the Brookings Institution who was the co-writer, with Terry Moe, of *Politics, Markets, and America's Schools*, a highly influential work that posits market-based solutions—of which charter schools are one example—to what its authors argue is an outdated and ossified public education bureaucracy.⁸ This valorization of the market and, by extension, the education management corporation, increasingly affects the theorization and quotidian practice of education in the US. Illustrating this profusion of neoliberal ethics into the daily practice of

charter schools, Kenneth Saltman notes a modified pledge said daily at an Edison School that he visits:

As a student at/Edison Charter Academy/I pledge to respect myself/Respect my teachers/Respect my fellow students/And respect my building/I will do nothing to keep the teacher from/Teaching and anyone, myself included, from learning.⁹

The Edison pledge translates the allegiance sworn to flag and republic in the American Pledge of Allegiance to respect for corporation/school, self, teachers, students and building. This sworn defense of "teaching" and "learning" implicitly casts all but Edison itself as threats to these vulnerable school-born products, and thus the need for the student's pledge of self-respect: presumably the student, through the act of learning, may come to know what is worthy of respect and thus what constitutes one's respectable self. In a similarly brazen act of subjectification to corporate individuation, the students at TIA are required to sign quarterly business contracts—in which they make commitments to properly discipline themselves (and their peers) through uniformity at school, and at home by maintaining extra-curricular reading schedules and even promising to have a quiet area to themselves as they work on homework each night—regardless of their age or literacy level. Through the repeated performance of corporate rituals such as the signing of business contracts, students learn to submit to corporate/school discipline and, further, to suture their educative needs to a need for corporate-intelligibility as the quotidian acts which comprise "living" become less and less discernible from the practice of corporate work. The rebranding of Edison Schools—following a dismal public stock offering in 1999 due to indications of devastating inefficiency and corruption¹⁰—is a move to maintain the assertion that the market provides viable solutions to the woes of public education; however, as TIA's use of quarterly business contracts suggests, private education management corporations (EMCs) are

not merely (ostensibly) producing the efficient operation of public schools, but are producing a very specific subject trained in the basic practices of corporate life.

Despite their overwhelmingly corporate constituency, local pro-charter school groups advocate for reform initiatives—such as those undertaken by EdisonLearning— which are discursively presented through a narrative of grass-roots progressive education reform in which local families are provided better education options according to neoliberal ethics of flexibility, autonomy, competition and choice. The corporatization of student-subjectification is unsurprising given that the movement to privatize public education is being supported both federally and locally by what Diane Ravitch refers to as “the billionaire boys’ club”—the Gates Foundation, the Broad Foundation, and The Walton Family Foundation—as well as The Friedman Foundation, American Federation for Children (with ties to Academi—formerly Blackwater—and the pyramid scheme Amway), Americans for Prosperity (the Tea Party organization funded by the billionaire Koch brothers), and K12, inc. (an organization mired in ethics and cheating scandals).¹¹ A key player in the financial and ideological battle for charter schools, and specifically Amendment One, in Georgia (despite being funded almost entirely by private out-of-state interests) was a group called Families for Better Public Schools (FBPS) whose website georgiahope2012.com (now vacant), assured its visitors that “Hope is in your hands.” The FBPS insignia depicted a child raising her hand, presumably to vote for Amendment One: to answer the question in favor of deregulation and market solutions for education reform. Even in this simple image lies a contradiction, for the child has no vote and thus no legally-sanctioned input into the education system, relying instead on her parents to vote to provide her with a satisfactory education. Ironically, the image conveys the illusion of choice while insinuating the child’s vulnerability (her naïve notion of self-empowerment) and thus, the

implicit guilt of the parent should they refuse to vote according to the pro-charter script. The rhetoric of privately-funded corporate-interest groups like FBPS invokes narrative tropes of crisis and grass-roots reform to create and/or exploit discourses of crisis as a catalyst for privatization. As Jacques Donzelot illustrates in his work on (among other things) educational philanthropy: though discourses of crisis have always lubricated the gears of state intervention into education and the government of families, the crises themselves—what/who is in crisis, that which is threatened, etc.—have tended to vary.¹² Over the past sixty years in America, the paranoia evoked by the discourses of failed nationalism/national-decline—such as that accompanying the launching of the Sputnik satellite by the USSR in 1957 and the Reagan administration's publication of *A Nation at Risk (ANAR)* in 1983, which portrayed an American educational system failing to produce a competitive international workforce—has been mobilized as a discursive proof of the need for change.¹³ In the cases of these two crises, the changes deemed necessary included the allocation of more federal money to education, increased state/local control, and a focus on math and sciences.¹⁴ More recently, various local crises have been cited as symptoms of systemic failure, such as with the CRCT cheating-scandal involving the Atlanta Public Schools (APS). In the case of this city and school system-specific crisis, both the devastating pressure of NCLB and bureaucratic corruption are cited as justifications (if not mandates) for ceding both federal and local control of public education to private management companies.¹⁵ In so doing, private corporate interests (whether appearing as themselves or in the guise of neighborhood coalitions) are presented as the solution to systemic conditions of crisis.¹⁶

By backing these "local," "grassroots" organizations and through more overtly non-local mediation, the Gates, Broad, and Walton foundations, et al., are explicitly seeking to fundamentally alter the shape and function of public education. These foundations effect and

affect education reform through their philanthropic practices which are referred to by many education scholars as "venture philanthropy," so called because in their philanthropic practices these foundations borrow "concepts from venture capital finance and business management" as they seek a return on their investments.¹⁷ Perhaps the corporate/business-oriented way of life into which students are being inducted is but one such return: student-workers conditioned to an ontology of life as work. As the influence of venture philanthropy over education reform becomes increasingly pervasive, so the need for informed critique grows ever more pressing. Such a critique benefits from an historical consideration of subject-formation, philanthropic practices, and education as modalities of modern economic and socio-political regulation.

The variety of philanthropic techniques and educative restructurings that have appeared throughout Western Europe and the US from the dawn of the Progressive Era to the present day have often involved a re-narration of subjective relations—a disciplining profusion of "risk" facilitating further consolidations of State/institutional power. As Lennard Davis notes, ability (or the biopolitical viability of subjects) has historically been linked to malleability, or susceptibility to institutional discipline/regulation: the ability to labor and to learn to labor according to the exigencies of the capitalist state.¹⁸ Charter schools are important objects of analysis because they embed a third party—the corporation—into the subject and State formation in such a way that State power is mitigated by corporate imperatives even as these imperatives are served with public monies collected by the State. This neoliberal reconfiguration of public education is catalyzed by tropes of both the needful citizen-in-crisis and national crises in public education—such as those articulated by neoconservative anxieties over failed-nationalism and international competition following the Reagan administration's publication of *ANAR*—suffused with narratives of federal and local systemic failure and the need for teaching trans-national

corporate desirability. As TIA's Parent Student Handbook clearly exemplifies, this reconfiguration of the public education system is driven by neoliberal ideals of personal responsibility, entrepreneurship, and globalization. The current fetish of education-reforming venture philanthropists, charter schools represent a space in which narratives of crisis and neoliberal ideals are fundamental components of subjectification. In an effort to better understand the increasingly common practice of subjectification in charter schools (and how it may differ from previous modes of educational subjectification), it is important to consider—albeit briefly—the milieu out of which arise contemporary conceptions/practices of education in the US.

1.2 Literature Review

The practice of philanthropy is coterminous with modern liberal governmentality broadly and is particularly salient in discourses regarding modern modalities of education.¹⁹ Many contemporary education scholars cite a paradigmatic shift from what Kenneth Saltman describes as "scientific philanthropy"—such as practiced by the Carnegie Corporation and the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in the early twentieth century that despite being " beholden to a logic of cultural imperialism, was marked by a spirit of public obligation and deeply embedded in a liberal democratic ethos"—toward "venture philanthropy": a philanthropy articulated according to the principles of venture capitalism and thus, emblematic of the continuing neoliberalization of the American economy.²⁰ Saltman argues that venture philanthropy represents a "venture" insofar as it

treats giving to public schooling as a 'social investment' that, like venture capital, must begin with a business plan, must involve quantitative measurement of efficacy, must be replicable to be 'brought to scale,' and ideally will 'leverage' public spending in ways compatible with the strategic donor.²¹

Additionally, as Klonsky notes, the venture philanthropist uses "otherwise taxable income to wield influence and shape public life while amassing public goodwill."²² Through these contemporary capitalist maneuvers, Saltman argues, venture philanthropy radically departs from its predecessor insofar as scientific philanthropy's "spirit of public obligation" is discarded in favor of "privatization and deregulation, the most significant policy dictates of neoliberalism."²³ Furthermore, critics of venture philanthropy bemoan its de-democratizing effects on public schooling.²⁴ Klonsky cites Clinton's labor secretary from 1993-97, Robert Reich, whose confidence in social uplift through private benevolence during the Clinton presidency was dissolved by 2007, when he argued that the "whole idea of *corporate social responsibility* [is] a dangerous diversion that is undermining democracy" (italics in original).²⁵ It is important to note, however, that the invocation of a democratic ideal that is arguably betrayed or bolstered by venture philanthropy's influence on American public education is not only mired in sentimental ambiguity, but produces an impression of schools that lacks sufficient historicization.²⁶ The narrative of a democratic educational practice in US schools in the early twentieth century depends upon an elision of such institutions as the American Indian boarding schools,²⁷ whose devastating practices of cultural deracination and Americanization support Andrea Smith's claim that "in the United States, democracy is actually the alibi for genocide."²⁸ Furthermore, the strict (neoliberal) contemporaneity that many scholars ascribe to venture philanthropy risks occluding an analysis of its many consistencies with historical philanthropic practice and the implications of these consistencies for contemporary education reform in which "public obligation," far from being discarded, is invoked as the impetus for "privatization and deregulation." In an effort to elaborate an historically situated analysis of contemporary education reform, of which charter schools are an increasingly popular technology, it is useful to

consider the social, political and economic conditions within which modern educational practices arose and transformed over time.

1.2.1 The Subject of Discipline

In his *History of Sexuality: Volume One*, Michel Foucault argues that a shift began in the seventeenth century in which the sovereign "right to kill" was amended by an additional mode of governance founded in "the power to 'make' live and 'let' die."²⁹ This shift in the form of power from that of the sovereign to what Foucault terms "'bio-power,'" is marked by the "development of various disciplines--universities, secondary schools, barracks, workshops," prisons, asylums, and a concomitant flourishing of political and economic concern regarding "the problems of birthrate, longevity, public health, housing, and migration."³⁰ Foucault argues that the rise of the disciplines and the increasing concern with the productivity of populations produces a new formulation of the subject: one who is articulated both as an embodied (disciplined) individual and as a population: "man-as-species...a multiplicity...[which] can and must be dissolved into individual bodies that can be kept under surveillance, trained, used, and, if need be, punished."³¹ This new subject is shaped and positioned both by the institutions of the State and by the collection of unprecedented amounts of data, which, when collated, reveals an average or a normative range of behaviors, physiognomies, predilections. As Foucault repeatedly makes clear, the biopolitical state is obsessed with efficiently ordering/organizing populations in terms of maximizing labor capacity while minimizing cost to the state. To this end, disciplinary/regulatory techniques are differentially distributed according to a racializing segmentation of populations—producing those conditions in which certain bodies are made to live and others allowed to die. The demographic construction of populations (or races) which are differentially ascribed life or death—a practice rooted, as Foucault avers, in "colonizing

genocide"—is produced through assorted techniques which are highly influenced by the economic and governmental contexts in which they appear.³² A contemporary example is Berlant's consideration of the biopolitical praxis of late-capitalism, in which she coins the term "slow death" to describe "the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence."³³ Part of Berlant's point here is to note that liberal ideals of rationality and empiricism are operative in the naturalization of notions of racial conditions, in which various symptoms of the systemic disenfranchisement enacted by the biopolitical state are imagined instead to be an essential, historical condition. Berlant's critique elegantly exposes the fallacy of the liberal fantasy of meritocracy as a guise in which to cloak biopolitical racism (and in so doing extract a profit). As Foucault notes, biopolitical racism refers neither to "the ordinary racism that takes the traditional form of mutual contempt or hatred between races," nor to "the ideological operation that allows States, or a class, to displace the hostility that is directed toward [them]...onto a mythical adversary."³⁴ Instead, biopolitical racism "is bound up with the technique of power, the technology of power...that allows biopower to work. So racism is bound up with the workings of a State that is obliged to use race, the elimination of races and the purification of the race, to exercise its sovereign power."³⁵ As Berlant points out, this Foucauldian notion of race and the need for racial purification is a primary technique of (bio)capitalist government (and Government) in the U.S. and abroad. In the case of TIA, the biopolitical imperative for "purification" is expressed through a presumption of families' (socio-economic/cultural) risk/threat that catalyzes philanthropic practices (as means of subjective reconfiguration) and, by extension, governmental discipline. In TIA's discourse, subjects' "riskiness" is produced as a threat to both the school and the subjects themselves. A consideration of contemporary debates

regarding the public education system in the U.S. proffers clear examples of some ways in which tropes of "threat" and "purification" (or, more often, "opportunity" to more closely approximate capitalist norms) are used to catalyze the economic and socio-political reorganization of subjects.

1.2.2 A Neoliberal Turn: The Crisis and (Re)construction of Contemporary Education in the U.S.

The quantitative population of demographic empiricism and the exigencies of an increasingly economically-coded ontology of life were influential factors in the emergence of what many scholars have termed neoliberalism. For Foucault, the novelty of neoliberalism lies in the fact that unlike the liberal ideal of making "a free space of the market within an already given political society," neoliberals take "the formal principals of a market economy" and project "them on to a general art of government."³⁶ In contemporary American neoliberal discourse, the projection of market principles onto public education would, perhaps, be too weak a metaphor. One of the most influential architects of contemporary American neoliberalism, Milton Friedman, argues that "privatization of a sizable fraction of education services...will unleash the drive, imagination, and energy of competitive free enterprise to revolutionize the education process."³⁷ According to this neoliberal narrative, the inordinate waste inherent in governmental bureaucracy is eliminated by a strict policy of privatization and market competition in which, it is presumed, for-profit service providers will maximize the quality and efficiency of their services in an effort to protect their bottom lines. As Friedman avers: "only a crisis—actual or perceived—produces real change," and it is during these moments of peril and possibility that Friedman and his compatriots seek to privatize unprecedented swaths of public resources.³⁸ The "crisis" of American public education is one such site in which neoliberal privatization has been invoked as a just-in-time savior.

As Michael W. Apple asserts, neoliberals, neoconservatives, and a "managerial middle class" want us to know that "we are living in a period of crisis...[and] at the center of the crisis...is the school."³⁹ According to its critics, the lamentable condition of the public education system—diagnosed according to such corrosive rubrics as NCLB—is the result of "antiquated and unwieldy public education bureaucracies" or what Stone refers to as "the traditional 'education regime.'"⁴⁰ The public discourse debating the merits of public school reform reflect this notion of an intractable and woefully inefficient governmental bureaucracy desperately clinging to power.⁴¹ Many scholars locate the initial move to correct the inefficiency of the contemporary public school system in the late 1970s and early 80s, a time in which competition with Japan's technology industry was a significant factor in the call for reform.⁴² This trope of national vulnerability due to educational inefficiency was canonized by the publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), "which argued that American schools were undermining the competitive position of the United States in the global economy" and was staunchly supported by the Reagan administration.⁴³ However, the Reagan administration (and by proxy, neoliberals and the nascent neoconservative movement) was unable to push school reform legislation through Congress.⁴⁴ Throughout the 1990s proponents of school reform gained ground and by the fall of 2001, when Washington was still flush with a desire for post-9/11 solidarity,⁴⁵ President Bush managed to gain the necessary bipartisan support to sign the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law.⁴⁶

Mandated by federal and state governments, NCLB's "corrective" mandates include "the creation of quantitative standards and the imposition of punitive accountability systems via norm-based, high-stakes testing."⁴⁷ Its advocates claimed NCLB would "close the achievement gap by holding school districts and states accountable" to strict standards, though,

quite to the contrary, it is clear that "NCLB is specifically harmful for the children described as 'disadvantaged students.'"⁴⁸ Though the Bush administration made much of its school reform agenda's focus on improving education for such disadvantaged populations, in practice these policies have often further increased class stratification and segregation while failing to yield promised graduation rates and other educational outcomes such as literacy rates.⁴⁹ Diane Ravitch, the former Assistant Secretary of Education for George W. Bush, who was at one time a major proponent of the Act, describes NCLB as "institutional fraud" in which an impossible mandate for the achievement of 100 percent reading proficiency by 2014 is used as the rubric by which public schools are closed and often turned over to private interests to be reopened as charter schools.⁵⁰ Thus NCLB provided education reformers with both the "evidence" of a crisis and a juridically-coded mandate for neoliberal intervention. In so doing, NCLB modeled Friedman's aforementioned technique of evoking simultaneously crises—"real or imagined"—and their market-based solutions. As Melinda Cooper avers, this neoliberal one-two punch operationalizes the two mutually constitutive drives of the "capitalist delirium—the drive to push beyond limits and the need to reimpose them, in the form of scarcity."⁵¹ Following this logic, the "crisis" in education is tantamount to a scarcity of educative efficacy that must be ameliorated by flexible regulations allowing education management companies to make use of what resources are available, including increasing extra-curricular demands for student and parent labor (to compensate for any remaining "scarcity"). As my analysis of TIA's Parent-Student Handbook (PSH) will illustrate, these extra-curricular demands are often based on a particular normative construction of students'/parents' economic and physical abilities and as such, under the guise of opportunity, the biopolitical system of differential support and neglect is redeployed.

Though traditional public schools were never egalitarian,⁵² but instead utilized

educational inequality to further entrench class division,⁵³ the neoliberalization of public education via charter schools is described by some scholars as a distinct contemporary process of "conservative modernization" in which schools produce a modern workforce of consumer-subjects.⁵⁴ As such, the language of the free market comes to replace that of civic responsibility, shifting the emphasis of institutions of education "from student needs to student performance."⁵⁵ Likewise, Hankins and Martin cite Lubienski's assertion that "charter schools have essentially redefined the meaning of public education away from concerns with the public good towards concerns with consumer goods."⁵⁶ Indeed, Aguirre and Johnson observe that "the push for charter schools [is] dominated by neoliberal rhetoric in which children [are] depicted as 'human capital' and schools [are] portrayed as 'training centers' for workers needed in an expanding global economy," a discourse complicit with what Arce, Luna, Borjian, and Conrad refer to as the instantiation of a "corporate welfare state" in which both the (publically funded) economy and population of charter schools are fed directly to corporations (muddling the distinction between student and profit-inducing employee), which in turn direct the interests of education more broadly.⁵⁷ Hankins and Martin note that "charter schools reflect the neoliberal trend of finding market-based solutions to social-service provision and offering 'choice' and 'autonomy' to parents and charter-school administrators."⁵⁸

Bulkley, Fisler, and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education outline five core theoretical components of charter schools: choice (variety of schools), autonomy from law/flexibility of curricula and school governance, higher quality of education through market competition, accountability to parents/community, and improved student performance.⁵⁹ A chorus of critics bemoan the inefficacious juxtapositioning of autonomy and accountability,⁶⁰ especially in light of the CREDO report on charter schools' failure to improve test scores.⁶¹

However, some commentators have collected charter school "success" stories,⁶² though the veracity of these stories' claims to charter school success varies greatly, as is evidenced by Edison's claims to educative innovation and success despite the loss of its primary contracts in Boston and Philadelphia.⁶³ Other pro-charter scholarship veers away from a strict valuation of charter schools according to test-scores, citing other elements of Bulkley, et al.'s, five core components. Writing in 2001, Smith argues that critics of charter schools overemphasize the threats of privatization and fail to account for the democratizing potential of charter schools through systems of local accountability.⁶⁴ However, in the aforementioned case of Georgia's 2012 vote on Amendment One, the very mechanisms ensuring local accountability were eliminated with the support of "grassroots" groups claiming to represent local interests.

Apple's admonition that education must be considered with "reference to the global forces that influence policy and practice" is echoed by Hankins and Martin's assertion that contemporary public school reform, through the technology of charter schools particularly, "draws on a multiscalar discourse which simultaneously references responsiveness to local, neighborhood needs, and at the same time highlights the economic imperatives of a global, competitive city to differentially skill students/workers in order to capture mobile and fractured (global) capital."⁶⁵ Other theorists draw connections between the global expansion of the US military-industrial complex and the use of domestic charter schools to "enforce a corporate identity" on racially segregated populations in service of a white hegemonic ideal,⁶⁶ thereby enacting what Mahiri argues is an imperial project insofar as "empires...require pacification and acceptance of their objectives at home."⁶⁷ This project is predicated upon the creation of neoliberal citizen-subjects through American education's traditional functions of "teaching...citizenship and the construction of citizens" according to the demands of the capitalist

market.⁶⁸ Likewise, Johnson asserts that neoliberal reformers establish military charter schools for the "enforcement of global corporate imperatives."⁶⁹ Insofar as it marks the global expansion of corporate-discipline through education, the recent foray by EdisonLearning into the UK and, more recently, the UAE where it has begun to establish charter schools, provides but one example of this suturing of the global and the local according to corporate subjectification.⁷⁰ Through such an expansion, EdisonLearning continues to consolidate different bodies, cultures, and locations under its banner of adequate education through proper, charter school-based subjectification.

In this literature review, I have endeavored to illustrate the salience of the biopolitical production of subjects according to neoliberal epistemologies of rationality and free-market competition in contemporary American education reform. In so doing, I have illustrated the social, ideological, and political milieux in which appear critiques of the "neoliberalization" of education via charter schools in contraposition to a formerly "democratic" educational apparatus. I have argued that these critiques run aloof in their myopic fixation on the anti-democratic contemporaneity of neoliberal school reform discourse and, unmoored from their historical bearings, fail to account for the multiple orders of discourse in which they appear. In an effort to expand the capacities of contemporary education-reform critique by providing a more thorough historical ballast, and as a means of unpacking the contemporary critique of venture philanthropy, I have endeavored to trouble the presumption, articulated by Saltman and others, of a democratic past of efficacious humanism in US Progressive Era education/philanthropic projects. Taking these considerations as my point of departure, I will spend the following chapters exploring the ways that the capitalist ideals/imperatives of venture philanthropists such as Bill Gates and the Walton family interarticulate with the practice of educational-life at TIA. I

analyze the ways in which TIA is emblematic of venture philanthropists' reconstruction of American public education according to a valorization of globalization and an idealization of corporate imbrication with public education as a means of inducting the racialized subjects of the school into the global marketplace. Noting various mechanisms by which a neoliberal ethos of debt, risk, and opportunity play into the discursive construction of the subjects of TIA—as illustrated in the school's charter documents, web materials, and Parent-Student Handbook—I consider the ways in which these mechanisms effect and affect the practice of life for TIA's subjects within both the school and the home.

2. Methodological Considerations

In an effort to efficaciously unpack TIA's various documents and their effects/affects, I employ Critical Discourse Analysis, which as Fairclough avers, is based in a conception of "social life as interconnected networks of social practices of diverse sorts (economic, political, cultural, family, etc.)."⁷¹ As is briefly illustrated in the preceding pages, education and philanthropy are rich examples of such complex interarticulation and modulation of the various sites and performances of social life. Fairclough discerns three broad ways in which discourse is operable in social practices: as a system of linguistic particularity specific to a social practice/site; as inter-articulating representations of practice(s) which vary according to the variety of positions subjects may occupy within a practice; as a modulator of "ways of being" through "the constitution of identities."⁷² These three modes of discursive operation are central in the formation of educational policy/reform, critique, and subjectivation both historically, as the works of Donzelot and Foucault make clear, as well as contemporarily in both the practice of venture philanthropy (and the criticism of such a practice) and the proliferation of charter schools. As an illustration of contemporary educational praxis in the US (and, to a significant

degree, abroad), TIA's discursive formation and modulation of subjects is important, for as Fairclough asserts, when social practices come to be assembled in particular ways, an "order of discourse" emerges that "is not a closed or rigid system, but rather an open system, which is put at risk by what happens in actual interactions."⁷³ Subjectivities appear within the matrices of ever-burgeoning discursive orders, as subjects are compelled "to act and think and talk and see themselves in terms of new discourses."⁷⁴ At TIA, subjects are discursively constructed and simultaneously embody the possibility of reconstruction or refusal of such constructions. The significance of such discursive reconstruction or refusal is emphasized by Fairclough's contention that "the neoliberal political project of removing obstacles to the new economic order is...to a substantial degree led or driven by discourse."⁷⁵ It is my hope, in analyzing the discursive construction of the subjects of TIA, that the discursive constraints guiding subjectification at TIA (and US public schools generally) may be made more visible and thus, more susceptible to change.

The broad project of public education reform and, specifically, the charter school movement, is constructed/constrained by a number of influential discourses. I will analyze the various ways in which TIA's documents indicate a neoliberal system of ethics, and the ways in which the various boundaries and interactions of public/private, State/corporation, citizen-subject and laboring-subject are configured according to such an ethical system. Through a close analysis of TIA's PSH and other school documents, I will examine the ideals of venture philanthropy in their material practice. I will argue that TIA constructs itself as a site of opportunity in which parents and students are subjectified as debtors at risk of losing the privilege of the market-preeminence (biopolitical life) that TIA asserts is the guarantee of its education-product. I will discuss various techniques of neoliberal subjectification demonstrated

in the handbook, arguing that the effect of TIA's practices is not merely to produce consumer-subjects, but to produce subjects for whom an imperative biolabor is the perpetual condition of life itself. I will argue that the debt-of-opportunity incurred by TIA families (for whom biolabor is penance) reorients subjects to a way of life-as-peonage for those families marked for life in a globalizing world.⁷⁶ I will argue that this debt-bondage in which TIA positions its families is facilitated by a subjectivifying assemblage of neoliberal school reform rhetoric(s) whose teleologies respond to the "crisis" of education and the "riskiness" of TIA's subjects by conflating efficacious education with corporate identification and life with market-preeminence.

1.3 Conclusion

Contemporary public education reform in the US is increasingly shaped by private interests advocating the establishment of charter schools to ameliorate what is perceived to be a crisis of low test scores and illiteracy amongst American students. As indicated in the literature review above, from the 1990s on many scholars have criticized the charter school movement as a technique signifying the neoliberal corporatization of public education. Recent scholarship has focused on private interests, such as the Gates Foundation, who wield immense influence over education reform predicated largely upon their access to vast reserves of money. In the "venture" philanthropic practices of these private interests, critics claim to locate the neoliberal catalysts of the corporatization of public education. In the following chapters, I present a critical discourse analysis of TIA's primary documents—the school's charter petition and charter, Parent-Student Handbook, and website materials—and various media regarding the school, in which I analyze TIA's production of subjects according to discursive tropes of threat, need, opportunity, and personal responsibility. In the second chapter of my thesis, "Constructing Need, Performing Progress: Whose Business is Education at The Intown Academy of Atlanta?," I analyze TIA's

discursive production of students and parents as personally-responsible subjects-at-risk for whom TIA appears as the sole provider of education (and, by extension, life) through its offer of corporation-supported education. In my third chapter, "To Learn, To Labor: Contracting Survival at The Intown Academy," I analyze the subjectification(s) of parents and students at TIA, considering the ways in which the school's (often paradoxical) contractual demands of parents and students reconfigure the family according to TIA's demands for uniformity, volunteerism, and particular practices of home-life.

2 **CONSTRUCTING NEED, PERFORMING PROGRESS: WHOSE BUSINESS IS EDUCATION AT THE INTOWN ACADEMY?**

In October 2009, a charter was presented to the Atlanta Public School (APS) board proposing the construction of a new school, The Intown Academy (TIA), to be located in the city's historic Old Fourth Ward neighborhood. Long famed for being the home of legendary civil-rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., in the first decade of the twenty-first century the Old Fourth Ward garnered attention from such commentators as *The New York Times*' Rich Addicks, who fondly describes the neighborhood as "a cradle of culinary and artistic innovation and as a symbol of gentrification."⁷⁷ Indeed, in 2010 the local weekly *Creative Loafing* named the Old Fourth Ward "Best Bet for Next Hot 'Hood,"⁷⁸ and featured a variety of articles on the intra-neighborhood strife brought on by gentrification.⁷⁹ In tandem with Atlanta's Beltline project that bills itself as "the most comprehensive transportation and economic development effort ever undertaken in the City of Atlanta,"⁸⁰ a surge of private development in the early 2000s brought a proliferation of new housing construction accompanied by a quickly expanding entertainment corridor along Edgewood Avenue that contributed to a significant increase in the pace of gentrification in the neighborhood.⁸¹ In its charter petition, TIA cites various gentrification projects such as "the Ponce Park Place LLC redevelopment of City of Hall East, the revitalization of the Old Fourth Ward community, and the establishment of 'The Miracle Mile,' a four-block development project centered at the intersection of 12th and Peachtree streets in Midtown," as evidence of rapid expansion necessitating a new school in the area.⁸² TIA describes itself as a coalition of "neighborhood leaders from the Old Fourth Ward and Midtown, parents, and students, [who] have expressed a strong desire and have begun the process to reach across boundaries, freeways, and even history to support our city's plan for revitalization and

locate the new school in the heart of Intown."⁸³ From its inception, TIA positions itself as the spokesperson for the parents and students of the Old Fourth Ward and Midtown communities who desire "revitalization," an ostensibly more inclusive term than gentrification.

Though TIA technically would (and does) serve all families within the APS boundaries, the school's charter petition identifies the Old Fourth Ward and Midtown as the primary zones from which its students will be culled. TIA notes the socio-economic disparity between these two zones, describing the Old Fourth Ward as a "community where over 90 percent of students are both African Americans and economically disadvantaged" and Midtown as a "community where 13 percent of its student population is reported as being economically disadvantaged and 18 percent is African American."⁸⁴ Given this data, TIA's current student demographics—94% of its students are black; 92% are enrolled in the free and reduced-cost lunch program—seem to suggest that the school's students are primarily residents of the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood, indicating a stark disparity between the school's vision of racial and economic diversity and its actual student population.⁸⁵ The overwhelming socio-economic disadvantage of the students attending TIA significantly affects the school's funding in terms of Title I disbursements. TIA's instantiation was (and continues to be) fiscally enabled through federal funding via Title I, which allocates money for the purpose of "improving academic achievement for the disadvantaged," and supplements qualifying schools' budgets in an effort to meet "the educational needs of low-achieving children in [the US's] highest-poverty schools" by "closing the achievement gap between high- and low-performing children, especially the achievement gaps between minority and nonminority students, and between disadvantaged children and their more advantaged peers."⁸⁶ In its effort to ameliorate the precarity of its at-risk students, TIA pledges to "prepare students to become an integral part of the global, knowledge-based workforce":

This workforce combines the highest levels of academic instruction and achievement with the highest level of principled leadership and management skills. To this end, The Intown Academy will be an EdisonLearning Partnership school, offering the organization's powerful Four Cornerstones Design. We plan to start the process of becoming certified in the IBO Primary Years Program and Middle Years Program in our second year of operation. The school will reinforce this program by focusing on all aspects of international communications and incorporating the rich arts culture thriving in the Intown Atlanta area.⁸⁷

Though International Baccalaureate (IB) schools were originally a system of private international schools based in Geneva, the IB (formerly IBO: International Baccalaureate Organization) has developed a range of internationally accredited programs, most notably the IB Diploma program—a high school curriculum similar to Advanced Placement (AP)—that has become an increasingly common addition to federally and locally mandated US public high school curricula (for those schools that can afford it).⁸⁸ The IB Primary Years Program (PYP) and Middle Years Program (MYP) refers to two pedagogical programs developed in the mid-1990s, the stated-purpose of which is to "help [students] develop the intellectual, personal, emotional and social skills to live, learn and work in a rapidly globalizing world."⁸⁹ In keeping with the IB's requirement that all students learn a foreign language, TIA requires that all students study French. TIA offers a number of rationales for its selection of French as the single foreign language to be learned by students laboring to become "responsible citizens of the world," notably: "English and French are the two official languages of the European Economic Community (EEC)" and the fact that, "French is the 'working' language of most United Nations entities."⁹⁰ TIA's rationale implies a specific practice of "responsible" world citizenship, predicated upon global governance (UN) and transnational economic deregulation (EEC).⁹¹

In this chapter, I focus on the charter petition submitted by TIA, which articulates three distinct subject positions along a developmental trajectory, beginning with the at-risk local-subjects indicated by Title I and progressing toward the privileged "world citizenship" signified by TIA's IB curriculum. Between these positions is the imagined TIA student-subject, for whom the "world-class education" at TIA is ostensibly a bridge into participation in globalization. TIA's internal documents, such as the Parent-Student Handbook, reflect a shift in the school's focus from the hypothetical subject positions articulated by the charter petition to the actual subjects of TIA—students and parents. This shift in focus is also a shift in practice: a shift towards the disciplinary regulation of subjects in which the charter petition's socio-economic characterization of subjects is complicated by an exclusive, globalizing modernity, according to which TIA's students/parents appear as risky subjects who pose a threat to both themselves and the school. Situated according to this narrative of precarious temporality, TIA expands the subject positions laid out in its charter proposition, citing (at least three versions of) "community" in an effort to elaborate TIA's teleological map while discursively constructing the school as benevolent benefactor and its families as at-risk and personally responsible for their own success.

2.1 Learning to Survive: TIA in Practice

The cover page of The Intown Academy's (TIA) "2012-2013 Parent-Student Handbook" (PSH) is emblazoned with a proclamation of the school's "vision" of "growing lifelong learners who enrich communities."⁹² This "vision" is accompanied by TIA's mission statement: "The mission of The Intown Academy is to provide a rigorous and stimulating curriculum which promotes high academic achievement and growth of an inquiring, supportive learning community prepared for the evolving world." Taking these "vision" and "mission" statements as

my point of departure, I consider TIA's construction of itself and its students through the charter school's deployment of discursive tropes of "community" and temporal/spatial locality. I demonstrate how TIA's evocation of a public school system based in competition and the threat of obsolescence is a means of embedding subjects in an epistemologically prescriptive framework in which efficacious education is predicated upon corporate "partnership." From this vantage, I analyze TIA's multiplicitous evocations of "community," examining the discursive techniques by which the ambiguity of the charter school's role as community-service-provider allows TIA to narrate its attention to capitalist business imperatives as a commitment to local community/student development, while simultaneously producing students/families as threats to education.

TIA's vision and mission statements are drawn in multi-scalar terms suturing sentimental narratives of locality to capitalist ideals of globalization. TIA's mission statement evokes a particular temporal ontology of contemporary educative practice (and, more broadly, of socio-political subjectification) in which students must race to be included in an "evolving world" that threatens to leave them behind. This assertion of the threat of evolutionary obsolescence is juxtaposed with the school's "vision" of a pastoral educational scene in which "lifelong learners" are "grown." Though the pastoral quality of TIA's "vision" may be questionable, the school's language is resonant with popular discourses of urban farming and sustainable agriculture. This pastoral affect is invoked elsewhere by the school as well, in its construction of a "peace garden," described as a "schoolyard habitat."⁹³ In the TIA imaginary (indeed, the charter school imaginary, as discussed in the previous chapter), the crisis of public education's old guard—faced with an "evolving world"—is resolved within an imagined pastoral present in which charter schools operated by trans-national corporations affect and deploy nostalgized qualities

evocative of both the traditional American farmer and the little (local) country school house. Thus, TIA appears in duplicate: as the local educational farmer—whose work represents both site and sustenance of the community—and as the purveyor of evolutionary rigor, offering its subjects intelligibility in a globalized market. Implicitly, such intelligibility defines the difference between one being prepared for globalization's survival-of-the-fittest competition or subsumption (and elimination) in the wake of "progress." The presumption of TIA's vision is that those locally-grown "lifelong learners" who are fortunate enough to survive this evolutionary gauntlet may, in turn, "enrich" those "communities" which have also survived, or even draw ostensibly failing "communities" out of obsolescence and into modernity.⁹⁴

TIA's ambiguous invocation of community leaves room for broad interpretation. As a subjectifying technique (and marketing tactic), such ambiguity is attenuated by the farming metaphor of "growing lifelong learners" which integrates popular, sentimentalized/affective notions of pastoral city life with TIA's invocation of a globalizing world. Resonant with the language of contemporary "green" movements which tend to valorize local-sourcing of consumer products, urban farming, and sustainable agriculture, the construction of TIA's educational practice as agrarian cultivation renders an impression of community informed by geographic locality inflected by the nostalgic evocation of the bucolic traditions and folkways of an imagined collective past. In this sense, TIA imbues its construction of community (and itself) with those "traditional values" of a bygone era, claiming both the "wisdom" of the past and the relevance of an "evolving," globalizing modernity, as emblemized by the school's intention to install the IB PYP and MYP programs. Because of the tactical ambiguity of the school's evocation of "community," TIA's evolutionary teleology implies a specific community marked by evolutionary (globalizing/economic) fitness. This formulation of evolved communities—and

childhood as the site of evolutionary progress into such communities—has an historical precedent in recapitulation theory.

In her work on cultural constructions of adolescence in the US, Nancy Lesko notes the salience, in the late 1800s, of the recapitulation theory of childhood development, which holds that over the course of their development into adult citizens, young (white, male, Euro-American) children reproduce in microcosm the passage from "savagery" to civilization. Recapitulation theory asserts a teleological evolutionary process in which white cultural institutions (and their subjects) embody the evolutionary peak of existence. This evolutionary narrative was grounded in an immensely popular scientific theory emblemized by the Great Chain of Being (GCB). The GCB portrays a hierarchy of life—of animals, people, and societies—according to an "evolutionary history and a sociological ranking extending from European middle-class males and their republican government on the top, through women to savage tribes, with the lower animals at the bottom."⁹⁵ Though current US education rhetoric—including federal (Race To The Top [RTTT]) and local (TIA) iterations—avoids such matter-of-fact racialized hierarchization, the implications of an evolutionary meritocracy remain undisturbed in the mandate for students who must be prepared for competition in an "evolving," globalizing world.

As the Chair of the Board of Directors of TIA, Tom Lilly, states in his letter that opens the PSH, the evolutionary educative competition in which TIA's students engage is demanding "because rigorous, active learning always involves challenge." Yet he expresses his confidence that with the support of "our leadership and teachers, our education management organization EdisonLearning, and our many community partners[,] we will meet those challenges and continue to grow and move forward."⁹⁶ Lilly makes this point plain, that TIA's

evolutionary educational teleology depends not only upon teachers, but upon the school's "leadership," including an array of corporate allies—such as the Walton Family Foundation and Ernst & Young⁹⁷—with EdisonLearning at the helm as education management organization (EMO). The notion of "rigorous, active learning" is synchronous with TIA's survival-of-the-fittest evolutionary teleology. According to Lilly's suturing of corporate support to educative efficacy, the educationally-fit "lifelong learners" that TIA purports to produce are enabled to "evolve" through the imbrication of public schooling and private business. This narrative is implicitly a caution against the ostensible threat of failing to evolve due to the insufficient education proffered by (merely) public schools in Atlanta, as is implied in TIA's oft-repeated "vision to provide a high-performing K-8 public school option for the growing number of intown Atlanta families."⁹⁸ The (ostensible) provision of "a high-performing K-8 public school option" is facilitated by Parts IV and V of TIA's APS charter. Part IV, "Essential Innovative Features," allows TIA to implement a "year-round, extended school day in accordance with the schedule set by the charter school," and Part V, "Maximum Flexibility Allowed By Law," grants additional flexibility—such as an elimination of bussing and teacher certification requirements, diminished restrictions regarding curricula (enabling EdisonLearning programs) and discipline, and even the ability to expel students whose parents fail to engage in sufficient volunteer work for the school—in exchange for TIA's production of competitive CRCT test scores.⁹⁹ Thus, to compete in an "evolving world" both the school and its students as "lifelong learners" are not only allowed, but expected to be flexible as they compete to survive in an evolving, and risky, world. Following TIA's logic, rigid traditional (ostensibly low-performing) public schooling stagnates students', and by extension Atlanta's communities', development as these subjects/populations run the risk of failing to engage in those private partnerships and flexible practices which

facilitate "rigorous, active learning." According to this narrative, the stagnant (dis-abled) subjects of APS are not enabled to move "forward" on an "evolving" trajectory but are instead cast out of modern time as a population unable to evolve. In a single stroke, TIA's claim to evolution through charter school education casts the ostensible obsolescence of the traditional schools within APS as a factual condition beyond repair and the market as the arena in which evolved/evolving (flexibilized) subjects compete to enrich local "communities.

In her work, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*, Mimi Thi Nguyen argues that temporal-othering (such as that produced by TIA's "evolving world" narrative) is an historical imperial technique. Citing Anne McClintock's discussion of "'anachronistic space,'" Nguyen notes that "'according to this trope, colonized people...do not inhabit history proper but exist in a permanently anterior time within the geographic space of the modern empire as anachronistic humans.'"¹⁰⁰ Though the instantiation of charter schools in no way equates with the incredible physical violence common to colonization, charter schools' economic occupation of the TPS system—of which TIA is an example—employs analogous narrative tropes to produce charters as "evolving" and the occupied territory of TPS as a woefully anachronistic space. This inside/outside framework for configuring the temporalities of colonizer/colonized facilitates a dynamic in which "a colonialist sharing of time" may be proffered or denied the colonized.¹⁰¹ In the case of TIA, the (professed) opportunity to receive an education in keeping with an "evolving world" is proffered in exchange for parental/student commitments beyond those required of families by TPS. As Lilly notes in his opening letter, "as the board of a charter school, we know the commitment you have made by choosing The Intown Academy." Indeed, the traditional commitment of the school to the public is superseded (and nominally secured) by the commitment of the family to the charter school. This commitment—

of time (including 20 volunteer hours per year) and other resources (such as fees for required school uniforms), and of practices (transportation without bus support, required periods of silence at home to facilitate students' studies)—inducts properly behaved families into (at least the possibility of) evolving contemporaneity. Thus, capitulation to the demands of TIA's flexible schooling model is positioned as common-sense reciprocity within TIA's narrative of the threat of obsolescence and the opportunity offered students to become "lifelong learners" prepared for the rigors of globalization. Nguyen elaborates on this dynamic in which the gift proffered by the colonizer is the induction of its new subjects into modern time:

Given time...names the liberalist power *to set and speed up the timetable*—the timetable for progress through known processes or discrete stages toward freedom as the achievement of modernity. In other words, the gift is among other things a gift of time: time for the subject...to resemble or 'catch up to' the modern observer, to accomplish what can be anticipated in a preordained future, whether technological progress, productive capacity, or rational government.¹⁰²

Indeed, "technological progress, productive capacity, [and] rational government" are fundamental components of TIA's narrative and subjectifying practice. TIA imbricates technological progress with (vocational) productive capacity, presenting these as necessary components of proper, "rational" government: "Students will become technology literate by using the tools of their society with skill in an ethical, accurate, and insightful manner to meet the demands of the 21st century workplace."¹⁰³ According to this construction of techno-literacy based on the Edison program, Technology as a Second Language® (TSL®), technological fluency is an expression of rational government and a means of properly developing one's productive capacity to meet the needs of a modern market.¹⁰⁴ The resonance of TSL® with English as a Second Language (ESL) illustrates TIA's construction of techno-literacy as a modernizing gift insofar as this literacy ostensibly proffers the gift of modern intelligibility to

those who would otherwise be obsolete "others." In the PSH, TIA's offer of time (of modernity) is an invitation to survive modern globalization through proper business-partnership, competition, and productivity. In the school's official charter, TIA describes its intention "to create an educational center of excellence that embodies the diversity, creativity, and global and entrepreneurial character of the surrounding intown Atlanta communities."¹⁰⁵ Accordingly, the commitment made by TIA's parents and students enables students to join (or at least labor in proximity to) those imagined global(izing) communities of entrepreneurs whose market-intelligibility signifies their modernity and, thus, their relevance as subjects. Lilly's assertion that "The Intown Academy thrives because of the support and standards that all of us share," performs a fundamental epistemological position of charter schools broadly: through corporate imbrication, market-competition, and standardization, the school and its committed subjects thrive.

2.2 The Promise of Corporate Partnership: Constructing a (Discursive) Playground

In the 2012-2013 school year, TIA attracted local media attention with its plans to build a playground. Sparked by TIA's receipt of a \$15,000 Let's Play Community Construction Challenge grant from the Dr Pepper Snapple Group (DPSG) and national non-profit KaBOOM!, TIA's playground project is presented in *The Atlanta Intown Paper* as an example of the school's involvement with "District 2 Councilperson Kwanza Hall's 'Year of Boulevard' initiative committed to revitalizing the neighborhood and supporting its youth."¹⁰⁶ According to the leader of TIA's Playground Committee, Diana Bartlett, this was a significant step for the whole community because TIA would become the first school in the Old Fourth Ward to have a playground.¹⁰⁷ To supplement the DPSG/KaBOOM! grant, TIA sought and received monetary support from both local businesses and the Florida-based non-profit Institute for American

Health (IAH) which contributed \$4,000 provided by its partner, The Walmart Foundation.¹⁰⁸ A 501(c)3 non-profit, KaBOOM! partners with corporate sponsors, seeking to meet their "partners' business objectives while bringing active play to children while transforming underserved communities."¹⁰⁹ Though KaBOOM!'s website explicitly states that they will not partner with alcohol, firearms, pornography, gambling, or tobacco brands, or with "any computer gaming product with a Mature rating," the company apparently perceives no contradiction in partnering with DPSG to build playgrounds and, ultimately, to resolve "the Play Deficit," whose primary symptoms are listed as "childhood obesity" and ADHD—both of which have been associated with children's consumption of highly sweetened beverages.¹¹⁰ Instead of a conflict of interest, however, the corporate/non-profit partnership is configured according to a savior narrative, as KaBOOM!'s partnership information makes clear: "in *saving* play, we are creating healthier, happier, and smarter children; greener cities, better schools, stronger neighborhoods," (italics added) while providing for their partners "engaged employees . . . and stronger brands":

Associating your brand with KaBOOM! and the Save Play cause marketing platform will allow you to connect with moms, dads, grandparents, and others who care greatly about kids. This branded platform empowers your trade partners and customers to join your company in saving play.¹¹¹

KaBOOM! offers its corporate clients an opportunity to perform "car[ing] greatly about kids" as a means of attracting "moms, dads, grandparents" to the companies' customer bases. The implication is that by associating one's brand with KaBOOM! and "the Save Play cause marketing platform," corporations are enabled to join the intimate networks of families via their professed mutual concern for children. Furthermore, having insinuated themselves into these family networks, the "branded platform" serves as a site where both corporate allies and customers are "empower[ed]" to "save play" themselves. In other words, the "branded platform" provides a discursive space in which a corporation can construct an image of itself as concerned

about communities/community engagement and, in so doing, insert itself (and its "trade partners") into the intimate network of "moms, dads, grandparents." Given that both TIA and KaBOOM! are 501(c)3 untaxed non-profits, KaBOOM!'s savior narrative echoes Lilly's praise of corporate partnership, substituting non-profits as the means to thrive in an evolving world and clearly articulating what Lilly merely implies: that in this free-market-imaginary, performing acts of civic progress yields "stronger brands." In light of its ideologically problematic partnership with DPSG, KaBOOM!'s narrative of simultaneous social and corporate uplift depends upon an elision of corporations' culpability in producing/perpetuating many social problems. In this neoliberal narrative, both community and corporate development are constructed as equally important goals. As such, KaBOOM!'s refusal of particular partnerships on ethical grounds appears more as a tactical navigation of popular sentiment regarding childhood innocence and the threat of vice, through which the non-profit is able to embellish its characterization of itself as child/community-servant. Much like TIA, KaBOOM! depends on corporate sponsorship for its very survival and its ethics emerge within and according to that dependence.

The epistemological imperative implicit in these instances of non-profit partnership with corporations—the equation of civic uplift with corporate profit—must be constantly asserted through narratives of humanitarian capitalism and the relative elision of contrary evidence, as in KaBOOM!'s failure to acknowledge the disparity between its stated goals and the material effects of DPSG's products on communities. Similar to the way that KaBOOM!'s refusal of certain partners implies (for them) that additional ethical vetting is unnecessary, TIA's claim to community-enriching educative rigor through corporate-partnership is contrasted with the (implied) threat of a traditional public education system at risk of being left-behind in an evolving world. This construction of TIA and TPS imposes an ethical/analytic occlusion insofar

as the severity of the threat of obsolescence overrides critical interrogation of the possible effects of corporate-partnership. Indeed, the assertion that corporate-partnership is essential for educational rigor in a globalizing world positions TIA as an innocent benefactor. Both KaBOOM! and TIA affect this "innocence" via their "concern" for children. According to the terms of this valorization of the corporation and the non-profit, little (if any) room is left for these entities to be considered threatening or risky to communities.

Instead, the community—in this case, TIA's students/families—appear as potential threats, whose growth into modern evolving subjects is signified in Lilly's acknowledgement of "the commitment you have made by choosing The Intown Academy." This commitment or, more accurately, these commitments are frequently exacted as disciplinary techniques (in a Foucauldian sense), which (presume and) mitigate parental and student "threat" by codifying and mandating specific behaviors at school and in the home—such as the contractual requirement that all students from kindergarten to the eighth-grade read (or be read to) for a minimum of 20 minutes per day, four days a week with the penalty of permanent expulsion for those who fail to comply. Though I will analyze in depth the practice of quarterly business contracts at TIA in Chapter Three, it is important to note that the discursive allocation of threat to certain subjects/communities is not merely produced as a precedent for the disciplinary mandates codified by the Parent and Student contracts, but is codified and (re)produced by these disciplinary practices. The school constructs parents/students as threatening in order to produce a founding epistemological premise of TIA (as both a Title I school and a charter school), according to which notions of free-market effectiveness and the benevolence of corporate/non-profit partnerships are discursively produced as other than, and immune to, risk. This circular reasoning in which threat/risk is allocated to a group that is articulated by disciplinary

techniques, and then, if necessary, "discovered" to be an immutable quality (as has been the case in various Edison School closures where the intractable dysfunction of the student/parent population has been cited as the reason for poor school performance)¹¹² depends upon a sort of discursive sleight of hand by TIA.

2.3 Community Triptych

TIA facilitates a surface coherence of the various orders of discourse with which it is engaged—the efficacy of free-market competition generally and in education specifically, corporate/non-profit partnership as essential to civic and infrastructural growth, advocacy for local control of education, and the valorization of the child and the child-as-site of social reconfiguration. To do so, TIA employs at least three versions of "community": the socio-economically precarious student/parent community; the business (and political) community, marked by gentrification, globalization, and entrepreneurialism; and the community formed through TIA's suturing of the former population to the latter. Depicted in popular media such as the film "Waiting for 'Superman,'" a common presumption of charter school reformers is that when schools fail, communities fail.¹¹³ TIA's discursive production of non-profit/corporate partnership as an evolutionary necessity for proper development in a globalizing world depends upon the school's ability to stand in as the site of community such that corporate-partnerships with (and enrichment of) TIA signify corporate support of the local community. As is commonly the case with Edison schools which are marketed as "solutions" to failing schools in low-income areas,¹¹⁴ TIA's formulation of local community coheres both geographically—as an Atlanta public school—and socio-economically: 94% of TIA students are black, 2% are Hispanic, 2% are "mixed race," and 1% are white (for the remaining 1% there is no account).¹¹⁵ Of this population, 92% of the school's students are enrolled in the free and reduced-price lunch

program.¹¹⁶ According to the federal regulations for the public schools' free and reduced-price lunch program for the 2012-2013 school year, a family of four with an annual income of \$42,643 or less is eligible to receive reduced-price lunch, while a family of four with an annual income of \$29,955 qualifies for free lunch.¹¹⁷ Though federal poverty guidelines place an annual income ceiling of \$23,050 for a family of four to qualify as being impoverished, even those families receiving the highest incomes (while still qualifying for reduced-price lunch) have roughly \$10,660 to spend annually on each family member, an amount well below the poverty standard for an individual.¹¹⁸ The socio-economic precarity of these families is TIA's *raison d'être*, without which the Title I-funded school—as ameliorative solution to the problem of this socio-economic precarity—would not exist.

This narrative of socio-economic disability and remediation through charter schools allows TIA to discursively assume a posture of benevolence. This discursive posturing elides the historical effects of political/corporate partnership on contemporary socio-economic conditions (and the condition of public education) while simultaneously constructing the political/non-profit/corporate partnership embodied by TIA (and charter schools broadly) as an indisputable good. Yet, if one assumes that TIA—as a corporation-dependent non-profit—is self-interested and contingent, as I have demonstrated is the case with KaBOOM!, then the local, impoverished community, while facilitating TIA's instantiation, does not proffer institutional life in perpetuity but instead becomes the site of possible failure (such as poor performance on standardized tests which can lead to school-closure and loss of revenue for corporations). The threat of educational and economic poverty that was invoked to summon TIA into being is then recast by TIA through its demand for the community's "commitment," or capitulation, to the mandates enabled by the school's flexibility.

An example of TIA's mandates for students' and parents' commitment to flexibility is TIA's Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) "Intercession" Boot Camp. Beginning in March, the Boot Camp consists of three-hour sessions every Saturday morning until the CRCT is administered in April. CRCT testing is a major event for any public school, though for none so much as charter schools such as TIA, for whom students' test scores are the primary rubric by which APS may hold TIA accountable: consistent failure to produce test-score gains can result in the revocation of the school's charter. On its website, TIA instructs parents to "make every effort" to ensure their child's attendance and informs them that just signing up could pay off: "Parents who return their form are entered in a drawing for a \$50.00 gift card. Hurry and return your re-enrollment form to your child's homeroom teacher Monday!"¹¹⁹ Despite TIA's assurances of its efficacy in providing education, even the responsibility for students' test-scores is shifted off of the school and onto families via the Boot Camp (which, if the "re-enrollment form" is any indication, occurs with some regularity). The provision of the gift-card prize as incentive to participate in the boot camp belies the school's belief in parents' "authentic" commitment. Again, TIA's subjectifying demands are presented as "gifts." The "gift" of "intercession" by TIA on behalf of its "at-risk" student body is simultaneously a means of extracting value—through families' expenditure of time and money (for transportation, gas, etc.)—that would otherwise have had to come from TIA's budget. Though the renewal of TIA's charter depends upon sufficient student test scores, by positioning itself as benevolent "intercessor," TIA reframes its own precarity in relation to the CRCT exams in terms of student-risk and the need for families' increased commitment.

TIA's discursive juggling of subjects/subjective positions—i.e., who is signified by community; to whom risk or threat is ascribed—enables the school to maintain a position of

power in a system of differential privilege, while simultaneously affecting a narrative of community as a site of the benevolent (re)distribution of privilege. As with the school's suturing of the risk-saturated subjects of Title I to the prosperity signified by IB, TIA's capacious invocation of "community" allows for its cohort of socio-economically disadvantaged students and families to share both literal and symbolic space with another community of Atlantans, defined by their "global and entrepreneurial character."¹²⁰ A version of this community gathered at TIA on April 20, 2013 to assist in the KaBOOM!-sponsored initiative to build a playground in a day. Whereas the "gift" of the CRCT Boot Camp is configured as a pre-emptive protection against the "threat" of student failure (and the gift-card prize as a means of warding off the contagion of inauthentic parental commitment), the gift of the playground is presented as catharsis both spatially—as a site of play—and temporally as a site in which those "anachronistic" subjects "at-risk" of obsolescence are invited to, in Anne McClintock's words, "resemble. . .the modern observer" through play as a performance of "privilege."¹²¹ Distributing tee-shirts proclaiming "I [love] Old Fourthward" (sic) and emblazoned with his name,¹²² councilperson Kwanza Hall and a fleet of his supporters joined more than eighty playground-building volunteers representing Emory's Goizueta Business School, the transnational accounting firm Ernst and Young, the Walton-funded IAH, and a variety of local businesses from Atlanta's Old Fourth Ward.¹²³ Given their business and political associations, these volunteers represent a degree of socio-economic privilege that appears in stark contrast to that of the vast majority of students at TIA whose dire economic straights indicate families with very little (if any) means to take on entrepreneurial risk. While these volunteers contributed to the material expansion of TIA's resources by constructing the playground, their presence and their work also functioned as a public(ized) performance of neoliberal community-building in which ideals of trickle-down

prosperity via corporate benevolence interarticulate with TIA's own rigor-through-corporate-partnership narrative. Simultaneously, the association of affluent business-communities with students' impoverished communities via this performed proximity-of-subjectivities, inflects TIA's promise to grow "lifelong learners who enrich communities" with the sense that TIA enables students to bridge the void between the socio-economic sites of racialized poverty and bourgeois corporate affluence. This sense is cultivated throughout TIA's literature, as in the story of TIA's partnering with SunTrust which donated "hundreds of books" to the school's students.¹²⁴ Analogous to the discourse of the playground, students/communities-in-need are positioned as lucky recipients of an enriching corporate benevolence as described on TIA's website: "Students were giddy with excitement after they learned they could pick out not one, but THREE books to take home with them. They chose carefully, and showed off their newest possessions to their family, classmates and teachers."¹²⁵ Similar to the "branded platform" offered to KaBOOM!'s playground-building partners, the opportunity for students to receive books is also an opportunity for SunTrust to embed its brand into the intimate networks of TIA's families while eliding any possible complicity in that community's economic disenfranchisement. As with the construction of TIA (and corporate-partnership generally) as a political/a-historical solutions to economic inequity, the occlusion of socio-economic political analysis conveys the impression that, with TIA as guide, the spheres of privilege represented by the play-ground volunteers (and TIA's corporate sponsors) are proximate and penetrable for those students who lack privilege. Though the addition of a playground at TIA does extend its students' options for play and exercise, it does not necessarily increase these students' socio-economic mobility.

Whereas KaBOOM! promises its "community partners" the opportunity to benefit from "a community-building experience," the playground project is simultaneously an act of community-(re)narration emphasizing corporate altruism.¹²⁶ If one reads TIA's promise to "enrich communities" as a promise to enrich the socio-economic community represented by its students, the "gift" of the playground functions as evidence of TIA's ability to acquire and distribute "riches" which will, in turn, invigorate the school's educative efficacy and thus, students' abilities to become "lifelong learners who [will themselves] enrich communities." Yet, if one is to follow TIA's claim to embody those communities marked by "a global and entrepreneurial character"—as represented by the volunteers who built the playground—then the "gift" of the playground signifies an opportunity to conspicuously expiate the violence of the differential allocation of privilege through the performance of humanitarian acts: an affective narrative reconfiguration that can dramatically affect public perceptions of corporations. (An example of this is the ability of DPSG, through its KaBOOM! playground grants to "rebrand" itself as a benevolent corporation concerned with children's health without effecting any material change in its health-complicating products.) The business community is also figuratively enriched through its ironically self-interested use of volunteerism as a "team-building" exercise. Additionally, due to their hold on the three non-profits here at work (and others like them)—TIA, KaBOOM!, and IAH—companies are able to strategically donate otherwise taxable funds to sympathetic (and tax free) 501(c)3s. As Kenneth Saltman notes in his work on venture philanthropy, "for every \$10 given by the Gates Foundation, \$4 is lost from the public wealth in taxes."¹²⁷ Following Warren Buffet's donation of roughly \$30 billion, the Gates Foundation now has \$66 billion dollars at its disposal.¹²⁸ Based on Saltman's arithmetic, if all of these funds were disbursed through 501(c)3s, it would amount to \$26.4 billion dollars diverted from the public

wealth. By significantly reducing public tax monies, the practice of strategic donation negatively impacts the provision of public goods. Strategic donation impedes the provision of public schools and play-spaces, and thus widens, instead of bridging, the gap between those populations who are underserved and those who are socio-economically privileged, while simultaneously producing/exacerbating the very conditions of the public education system which pro-charter school reformers cite as symptoms of its anachronism and dysfunction.

Through its elision of the socio-political underpinnings which produce the advantaged and disadvantaged populations referred to thus far, TIA's third iteration of community implies an increasing meritocracy in relation to the school's distribution of privilege/opportunity. As with the example of SunTrust's donation of books, TIA's performance of corporate/non-profit benevolence is simultaneously a narrative of disadvantaged subjects becoming less disadvantaged. This is reflected in the announcement of TIA's new playground on the DPSG website Let's Play, in which "play" is presented as an opportunity previously unavailable to local children due to poverty and crime in the Old Fourth Ward:

The Intown Academy is located in the Old Fourth Ward neighborhood of Atlanta, Ga., the birthplace of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., near a street known for high crime and drug activity, and in a neighborhood that contains the highest concentration of Section 8 housing in the southeastern United States. A new playground at The Intown Academy will help increase opportunities for at-risk youth to play in Atlanta.¹²⁹

The DPSG/KaBOOM! playground is imagined to be a site in which children of the local, at-risk community of the Old Fourth Ward can enact privilege by engaging in a practice of "play" heretofore occluded by risk (this despite the fact that the playground is separated from the public by a fence).¹³⁰ Given KaBOOM!'s aforementioned assertion that the privilege of play produces "smarter children [and] better schools," the "at-risk" students of TIA are positioned according to a formula in which increasing "privilege" is tantamount to increasing performance.

TIA/KaBOOM!'s presentation of the playground as a means of providing students a better education is an assertion of students' increasing degree of personal responsibility for their own failures and successes due to the resources provided them. Despite the ostensible significance of the playground-as-site of play's (and, perhaps, of students') salvation, "the greatest success of the day,' according to Project Leader Dianna Bartlett, was the 'community support, the new partnerships developed and the strengthening of current partnerships.'"¹³¹ The a-political/a-historical present imagined by TIA allows the school to calculate its civic-benefit according to its own discursive terms. The inability of the gift of the playground to rectify histories of socio-economic disenfranchisement of populations of color is re-narrated in the TIA imaginary as an imperative for students marked by such disenfranchisement to enact advantage—play as confirmation of corporate-benevolence enabling educational rigor—and then, implicitly, to accept personal responsibility for their success or failure. The construction of students' personal responsibility for success or failure is the common implication of both the playground and the CRCT Boot Camp. This configuration of student-responsibility marks a drastic departure from the role of the students in TPS who Bill Gates (echoing the sentiments of charter school reformers generally) describes as victims of "obsolete" schools that "cannot teach our kids what they need to know."¹³² Through a cunning discursive inversion, students at TIA, having received the "gift" of evolutionarily rigorous education, are now threatened merely by their own lack of "commitment." Charter school reformers have responded to the "crisis" of public education by creating schools which are discursively protected from the ascription of failure, despite their actual success or failure in educating students.

As I have demonstrated in this chapter, the coding of students/parents as sites of risk is produced through the discursive construction of TIA as an unassailable provider of the gift of

evolutionary rigor through business-partnership. As TIA's playground project demonstrates, this discursive situating of subjects is accomplished through regulative performances of socio-economic interaction which embed subjects in authorized relations of power. For students/parents at TIA this embeddedness amounts to an ontological bondage in which subjectivity is articulated according to a free-market epistemology of corporate-partnership and personal responsibility. However, the subjects of TIA do not appear merely through the school's regulation of subjectivities and "communities," but are disciplined into being through the practice of the policies outlined in the PSH. It is to the material disciplining of subjects at TIA via business contracts and school directories, that I will turn in Chapter Three.

3 TO LEARN, TO LABOR: CONTRACTING SURVIVAL AT THE INTOWN ACADEMY

The Intown Academy (TIA) discursively positions its students and parents as subjects at risk of failure. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the risk of economic failure signified by TIA's Title I status is fundamental to the school's construction of its subjects (and their communities) as "risky." "Responding" to this construction of its subjects' risk, TIA presents itself as providing student and parent-subjects a path out of socio-economic precarity and into a prosperous future as participants in globalization. However, in receiving the "gift" of educational and evolutionary rigor, the subjects of TIA are reinscribed with risk in the form of their potential failure to properly utilize the gift. Thus, the subjects of TIA appear as threats to themselves and to the school, which is dependent upon ever-increasing student-scores on the Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT)—as signifiers of educational progress—to stay in business. In this chapter, I argue that the "risky" subjects of TIA are regulated according to a discursive suturing of student/family-security to the security of the school, by which students' educational needs and opportunities are constructed as inextricable from TIA's economic and labor requirements of parents. Addressed to the school's "risk" population, TIA's 2012-2013 Parent-Student Handbook (PSH) individuates its subjects, producing "students" and "families," and codifies the practice of life and labor at the school and in families' homes. The PSH's Family Contract, signed by parents/guardians, enlists these subjects to reorient their lives to fulfill TIA's demands for financial, spatial, and temporal resources, while student-subjects are subjectified according to the disciplinary routine codified in the "Student Contract," a quarterly business contract signed by all students attending TIA from kindergarten to eight-grade regardless of their ability to read or write.¹³³ Taking these contracts as my point of departure, I will analyze the

differential, and mutually-reinforcing, subjectification of parents and students at TIA. I argue that the threat of parent/student anachronism and the construction of these subjects as indebted to TIA (as discussed in the previous chapter) are the discursive foundation upon which are built the disciplinary mandates of both the Family and Student Contract. This (ostensibly pre-emptive) contractual disciplinarity is a site of TIA's persistent production of precarity for (and, thus, malleability of) the school's working-class parent and student-subjects. Furthermore, I argue that the collusion of classist norms with neoliberal formulations of the subject-at-risk (and the indebted subject) and the repetition of these through the quarterly signing of the contracts is a technique of subjectification to a paradigm which, naturalized through repetition, functions to consolidate the production of subjects for whom labor, as debt-servitude, is coextensive with the practice of daily life.

3.1 Reformulating Families, Proliferating Precarity

As I discussed in Chapter Two, the student and parent-subjects of TIA are variously (and simultaneously) positioned as threats to themselves and to the school. TIA's business contracts are disciplinary technologies grounded in the school's discursive construction of these subjects' riskiness. TIA's requirement that two contracts be signed—the Family Contract, to be signed by parents, and the Student Contract—marks a process by which the "community" of school subjects is individuated and collated according to a discursive taxonomization of TIA's subjects. As the titles of the contracts indicate, parents and children are differentially identified. The appellation, "students," connotes the individuation of children as members of the school community which simultaneously overlaps with and is distinct from the sphere of "family." Parents appear as representatives of their families or, more precisely, as representatives of their children-cum-students. As my analysis will make clear, this discursive individuation of students

and families allows both subject-positions to be differentially saturated with risk and, thus, to be differentially disciplined/regulated.

Though the Family and Student contracts bear many similarities to one another, they position their subjects according to the individuation of student and family as indicated by the epigraph to both contracts: "The Intown Academy will provide a learning environment for all students that demands high educational standards and high levels of parent/guardian involvement and responsibility."¹³⁴ This epigraph articulates the foundational premise of TIA's discursive construction of proper school-citizenship, in which the gift of education is simultaneously a demand for "high educational standards" regarding student performance and "high levels" of parent labor. Technologies of individuation, the contracts produce "families" and "students" as discrete sites of threat and responsibility. Following Foucault's notion of the disciplinary construction of subjects, individuation produces a population composed of discrete subjects who may be differentially governed. Though the responsibilities of students and parents are specific to those subject-positions, as the epigraph to the contracts illustrates, both families and students share a common, if contradictory, burden. As the parent and student populations of the school community are individuated, TIA discursively constructs these subjects' riskiness according to a framework of individual responsibility, rendering each subject "most responsible" for failure. Following their epigraphs, both contracts begin by having their subjects identify themselves and assume responsibility for their students'/their own education: "As a parent/guardian, I, (parent/guardian name), am the person most responsible for my child's education," and, in the "Student Contract," "As a student, I am the person most responsible for my education." Paradoxically, these discrete subject-positions are both characterized by a singular categorical imperative that describes students and parents as the "most responsible" for student success.

This (impossible) responsabilization of the subjects of TIA inscribes both students and parents with maximum precarity (while rhetorically minimizing school culpability for educational outcomes) and individuates these subjects according to their profiles of "responsibilities" for ensuring students' successful attainment of TIA's "gift" of education.

The contracts clearly indicate that the project of ensuring TIA's success depends on both the parental commitment—as hybrid subjects of the school/family—to provide the school with valuable resources and labor, and on children's commitments to become high-performing student-subjects. That children must commit to become student-subjects is evident in the introductory lines of the contract mentioned above, in which parents are required to state their names, whereas children's names are omitted in favor of the general designation: "student." TIA's production of the "student" depends on the deindividuation of the child from its familial milieu. The Student Contract marks a discursive removal of the child from the context of the family, as indicated by the distinction between Family and Student contracts. TIA's practice of deindividuation of the child (and subjectification of "the student") is similar to that of traditional public schools (TPS), in which the "child" leaves home and, upon entering the school-grounds, appears as a "student." In the case of both TPS and TIA, the school is a space of discipline according to which student-subjects are produced. Yet, TIA's Student Contract augments the socio-spatial discipline of TPS through the contractual responsabilization of individual children who are enlisted to "partner with The Intown Academy": "As a student, I am the person most responsible for myself and my own education. I will be a partner with The Intown Academy. I understand that to attend this school, I must meet the responsibilities listed [in the contract]." Thus, unlike the students of TPS (except in outlying cases, such as extreme violence or drug distribution), the student-subjects of TIA are threatened with the school's potential revocation of

the "gift" of education and, according to their responsabilization, configured as the source of that threat. In the contract's closing "Statement of Understanding and Agreement," children state their names and confirm that they "understand that [they] must agree to all terms of this Student Contract in order to remain enrolled at The Intown Academy" and that they "understand that if [they] do not live up to the terms of this contract, [they] may not be able to return to The Intown Academy." To overcome the threat of losing the "gift" of education, children must become "students" who are both docile recipients of school discipline and active participants in TIA's normative regulation of its subjects, as is evident in students' contractual commitment to "know *and reinforce* school rules" (my italics). To this end, the Student Responsibilities section of the Student Contract mandates specific practices at school and at home which will ostensibly produce students who rise to TIA's "high educational standards." Likewise, the Family Contract includes a Parent/Guardian Responsibilities section that details proper parental behaviors to ensure students' compliance with school rules and additional responsibilities including various "volunteer" labor requirements as well as prescriptions for re-orienting the behaviors and spaces of daily life outside of the school. Common to both contracts, three primary sites of responsibility distinguish the student and parent-subjects of TIA: school uniforms, volunteer work, and homework/home life.

3.2 D(u)ress Code

TIA begins its list of "student responsibilities" with the stipulation that students "abide by the uniform policy." The Family Contract's Parent/Guardian Responsibilities section begins with a modification of this requirement, configuring the parent as the responsible party in ensuring the student's uniformity. The "transformation" of the child into the Student upon entering the disciplinary space of the school is intensified by this practice in which the child, in becoming a

"student," changes its material appearance. In the PSH, TIA strictly mandates which colors, styles, materials, and sizes of shirts, pants, undershirts, sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets, vests, belts, socks, tights and shoes may be worn by students. The requirement that students wear uniforms is a technique of subjectification in which the "threat" of the child's home (emblemized by "at home" clothes signifying the child's constitution as subject of both the family and the broader socio-economic community in which the family appears) must be literally cast off and replaced with TIA-authorized garments. As Edward Morris avers, school uniforms are often popular in urban school settings in which populations of color are frequently configured as lacking an understanding of "appropriate" dress-standards.¹³⁵ "Successful students" in these settings are enlisted to enact the transformative efficacy of school discipline through their performance of "normative comportment" and their uniformity of appearance.¹³⁶ Likewise, wearing the TIA uniform signifies the student's constitution according to school discipline through her regimented and branded attire: all students' "tops must have the Intown Academy logo" and be otherwise free of any other symbols or writing.¹³⁷ For the school's population of families who live near or below the US poverty line, TIA's mandate of particular purchasing practices exacerbates the precarity of these already economically-crunched families who are pressured to perform an inflated (and possibly unattainable) degree of economic privilege to maintain their children's access to the "gift" offered by TIA.

Requiring students to wear uniforms is a subjectifying technique available to both traditional and charter schools in Atlanta Public Schools (APS). The district's official uniform policy states that students who cannot afford a uniform and who live in the attendance zone of a traditional school which requires uniforms "shall not be denied entry to the school for that reason."¹³⁸ Though the formal difference between "entry to the school" and attending class is

unresolved in the ambiguity of APS' language, in the FAQ section of the APS website, inquirers are informed that students who cannot afford a uniform are often accommodated: "most schools have discretionary funds and/or partners who can assist families who cannot afford the uniforms in procuring the appropriate garments."¹³⁹ Indeed, it is legally imprudent for these traditional APS schools not to have such discretionary funds, for, according to Nadine Strossen of the American Civil Liberties Union, "school-uniform policies have been vulnerable to challenge only when they do not make provision for free uniforms for those who cannot afford them, or when they fail to include a provision allowing parents to opt their children out."¹⁴⁰ However, due to the flexibility granted TIA by APS in exchange for the school's promise to deliver improved CRCT scores, TIA has no requirement to provide such assistance to families in need, nor is the school required to allow students to enter the school, as the first stipulation of the "Student Responsibilities" makes clear: "I will abide by the uniform policy. . . I know that I will be dismissed from school should I come to school in anything other than the uniform." The Family Contract enlists its parent-subjects to affirm that they, too, "will abide by the uniform policy [by] ensuring [their] child is dressed in the required Intown Academy uniform every day that he/she attends school." The demand for uniformity of dress "every day that [the student] attends school" places a unique burden on the families of TIA, who, unlike their counterparts in traditional APS schools, have a year-round schedule.¹⁴¹ The Family Contract's omission of the threat of student dismissal due to unauthorized attire suggests that this threat is specific to TIA's construction of student-subjects. Though in practice TIA could ostensibly choose to provide clothes to an improperly uniformed student or make an exception for the day as with Atlanta's traditional schools, TIA's (discursive) threat to dismiss students is a technique by which the disciplinary mandate of proper uniformity is co-extensive with the student's risk of being denied

the very student-subjectivity which parent and child are laboring to secure. Furthermore, the student's risk in the face of ever-impending judgment is explicitly produced by the Uniform Policy requirement that students' "should be well groomed in appearance," and that jewelry "should not be excessive per the sole judgment of The Intown Academy."¹⁴² In each regulation regarding uniforms students of TIA are disciplined, even when clear boundaries cannot be articulated, such as with students' grooming or jewelry. As with the responsabilization of parents and students in the introduction of the contracts, such regulation affects a perpetually unresolved precarity in which even the most willing of subjects are still always at-risk. It is important to note that the daily threat of dismissal due to improper attire is situated within the broader threat of the contract whereby the student acknowledges that if they "do not live up to the terms of this contract," then they "may not be able to return to The Intown Academy." To survive such a threat, students must interiorize TIA's discipline and become self-regulating subjects. The "Family Contract" complements TIA's construction of the student by positioning parents as agents of student-regulation. Borrowing a phrase from Benjamin Baez and Susan Talburt, TIA's inversion of the popular notion of school as *in loco parentis*, produces parents as *in loco scholasticus*—as the agent(s) of the school within the home.¹⁴³ This production of the parent as regulator of the Student reorients the traditional power relationship of parent and child, appropriating the historico-cultural networks of parental power to assist in TIA's subjectification of students. This subjectification of students simultaneously subjectifies parents and reconfigures the space of the family, and, through the repetition of these acts of obeisance to the authority of school discipline, reifies TIA's construction of itself as provider of educational and evolutionary rigor. The precarity of the student-subject—who must be constantly monitored,

tracked, and disciplined—is the discursive catalyst whereby TIA is able to position parents' daily practices and private spaces as disciplinary sites of resource/labor extraction.

3.3 The Personal is the Profitable: The Parent-Subject's Life as Labor

"Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. . . You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love." — Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., quoted in the *Annual Fund Campaign* page on the website of The Intown Academy.

Upon entering the school, the uniformed student-subjects of TIA are enlisted to stave off the threat of "the home" by performing (and interiorizing) the normative discipline of the school, whereas the parent-subjects of TIA (whose "risky" lack of education is presumed, as indicated by TIA's placement of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s statement on their web page for the school's Annual Fund) are enlisted to become school resources, both as agents of TIA's disciplinarity and as material laborers for the school. The flexibility provided TIA by APS allows the charter school to omit some of the basic services proffered by traditional public schools (TPS), such as the provision of bus services. This flexibility also enables TIA to have an extended school-day, year-round classes, and to require "voluntary" parent-labor as a requisite for students' admittance to (and continuing attendance of) the school. Though TIA is technically a tuition-free, public school, these non-traditional practices are a sort of hidden tuition required of TIA's parent-subjects.¹⁴⁴ The fact that these requirements of parents are tantamount to tuition is plain: if the parent herself, or a surrogate acting in her stead, cannot transport her child to and from school each day, then her child cannot attend TIA. Furthermore, should a child be admitted to TIA whose parent has sufficient means to transport the child to the school, the parent is then held in thrall to contractual commitments to "volunteer" her labor, which, if unfulfilled, can lead to the expulsion of the student as indicated by the final stipulation of the "Family Contract": "I

understand that if I do not live up to the terms of this contract, my child may not be able to return to The Intown Academy."¹⁴⁵

TIA's Family Contract mandates that each parent "donate at least. . .2.5 hours per marking period (single parent families) of volunteer service to the school each school year," in addition to participating "in at least one fundraising event during the year." TIA's school year is divided into quarterly marking periods. Therefore, a "single-parent family," or, to be clear, the single parent,¹⁴⁶ must "donate" ten hours per school year of "volunteer" labor. For "two-parent families," the hours are doubled to twenty per year. In estimating the value of TIA's hidden tuition, one must recall that these "volunteer" hours must be added to the time and cost both of daily transportation as well as transportation to "extra-curricular" events such as the Intercession CRCT Boot Camp, which is held on Saturdays.¹⁴⁷ In the sub-section of the "Family Contract" entitled "How The Intown Academy Will Be My Partner," the school informs parents that "The Intown Academy will offer [them] many kinds of volunteer opportunities to best link the talents and interests of [their families] with the needs of the school." These "opportunities" are listed on the TIA website under the *Volunteer Now* link. Though the list is too long to reproduce in full here, some of the tasks "offered" by TIA include "office/clerical work; shelving and cataloging books in the school's Media Center; assisting teachers in the classroom; assisting teachers outside the classroom by helping them prepare lessons; updating information on the school's website; tutoring students; [and] helping to maintain the school's building and grounds."¹⁴⁸ As with the school's neglect to provide transport, the flexibility enabling TIA to demand "volunteer" labor allows the school to save money by minimizing its staff and having its parent-subjects pick up the slack. As Kenneth Saltman notes, this is a consistent practice among Edison schools, which have come under fire for exploiting not only parent, but student labor for such tasks as janitorial

and clerical services.¹⁴⁹ Furthermore, the "Student Contract's" correlative requirement for "volunteerism"—that students "participate in the required number of community service hours applicable for [their] grade level"—is only elaborated elsewhere in the PSH as a punishment for "Level Three" (of Four) disciplinary infractions such as "fighting; Theft; [and] Sexual Harassment of student/staff;" emphasizing the punitive nature of "service" at the school and community.¹⁵⁰ TIA's direct economic gain from the products of parent-labor is but one facet of the value produced through this subjectifying practice.

The homepage of TIA's website features a toolbar offering visitors links to information regarding academics, school location/contact information, and *Ways to Give*. Once opened, the *Ways to Give* link suggests various methods for donating money and labor to the school. Approaching the *Volunteer Now* link at the bottom of the list, parents are reminded of the Annual Fund Campaign (AFC), the goal of which is to obtain "100% participation from board members, faculty, staff and parents" in donating money to the school.¹⁵¹ Visitors to the *AFC* page, such as Title I-identified parents who might pause inquiringly amidst their investigation of the school's labor "opportunities," are informed that despite being a publically-funded school, TIA "requires funds over and above the state, federal and local dollars we receive." Thus, as the parent-subjects of TIA seek to fulfill their contractual commitment to pay the cost of the school's hidden tuition, that cost subtly expands: as if throughout the allocation of the "gift" of education, parent-debt accrues interest.

The threat of "the home"—marked by the threat of "obsolescence" discussed in Chapter Two—and TIA's provision of the "gift" of educational (evolutionary) rigor, are the central, subjectifying elements in the school's discursive construction of itself and its subjects. As a technique to increase TIA's labor/value extraction from parent-subjects, the persistent

proliferation of the school's hidden tuition is operationalized according to this foundational discursive presumption of risk and "opportunity." This subtle, subjectifying expansion of parent-debt is produced within a distinctly neoliberal framework which Lauren Berlant describes as "a zone of temporality marked by ongoingness, getting by, and living on, where structural inequalities are dispersed and the pacing of experience is uneven and often mediated by way of phenomena that are not prone to capture by a consciousness organized by archives of memorable impact."¹⁵² In other words, the contractually codified arrangement by which parent-subjects of TIA are traded the "gift" of evolutionary rigor for their children in exchange for specific acts of labor (value production) embeds parents in an increasingly complex web of resource extraction in which the primary commitment of "volunteer" labor is attended by a profusion of more passive sites of resource extraction. For parents, the hidden tuition of "volunteerism" and daily-labor—such as transportation and the provision of students' uniforms—is attended (and exacerbated) by a set of formerly non-school related tasks, such as shopping online or at the grocery store. Value is extracted from parents according to both their contractual assignment of tasks which are deemed by TIA to be desperately needed (such as "volunteerism") and by the school's insinuation of itself into those common practices which are, for parents, merely necessary, daily acts of "getting by, and living on."

The requirement of "volunteerism" produces value-through-labor for the school and increasingly articulates parent-subjects' private lives according to TIA's disciplinary mandates. Parents' (formerly-) private lives are positioned as value-laden quotidian spaces from which the school may steadily extract monetary resources. This is illustrated by the *Giving Made Easy* page on TIA's website, which notes that "Thanks to our hardworking volunteers on The Intown Academy PTA, you can now support The Intown Academy while you shop, search, or even

while you pay your Georgia Natural Gas bill! . . .sign up to Give While You Shop!”¹⁵³ The *Giving Made Easy* page informs parents of various corporate entities that will donate small percentages of their earnings, from purchases made by parents, to the school. TIA enlists parents to use a Target Visa or Target card; to shop at Publix; to collect Box Tops for Education; and (presuming parents have access to the internet) to use goodshop.com. Parents who use a Target Visa card can participate in the corporation's "Take Charge of Education" program, which pledges to donate one-percent of its sales at Target or Target.com to a K-12 school of these parents' choosing. The program boasts that since 1997, it has donated \$387 million to schools; however, given the 29.00% Annual Percentage Rate associated with the credit card, it is clear that this figure represents a very small fraction of the amount of money Target earns from parents.¹⁵⁴ Similarly, the Box Tops For Education program is much more a profit-producing tactic for corporations than a money-maker for schools. The Box Tops program donates ten cents to a school for each participating-product label submitted.¹⁵⁵ Though, as Andy Bellatti notes in his piece posted on the website *Civil Eats*, "while General Mills' ten-cents-for-every-product-you-buy offer seems generous, it's an almost insignificant amount to a company that spent \$73.7 million advertising Honey Nut Cheerios, \$29 million for Cinnamon Toast Crunch, and \$12.6 million on Lucky Charms in 2011 alone."¹⁵⁶ In an interview with Bellatti, New York University Paulette Goddard Professor of Nutrition, Food Studies, and Public Health, Dr. Marion Nestle, acknowledges that "schools may get [supplies] but the winner here is the cereal company. It sells more boxes and generates great goodwill among kids, parents, and schools, all of them thoroughly distracted from the effect of the products on health." The "distraction" to which Nestle refers, is an example of the practice of corporate "re-branding" (or, perhaps more accurately, re-affectation of consumers) through performances of public altruism as with the Dr.

Pepper-Snapple Group in the construction of TIA's playground (see Chapter Two). Regarding discursive reconstructions, TIA's recommendation that parents shop at goodshop.com not only represents (along with the other recommendations on the *Giving Made Easy* page) a disciplinary insinuation of the school into the private lives of parent-subjects, but is a site in which TIA's discursive constructions, of at-risk parents/students and the school as gift-giver, are momentarily reconfigured.

Despite the narrative regarding the construction of the playground in Chapter Two, in which TIA cited its educational efficacy through corporate partnership, the *AFC* and *Giving Made Easy* pages on the TIA website construct a different picture in which the school itself is at-risk. Indeed, TIA implores parents to donate money: "your [monetary] support right now is critical."¹⁵⁷ Recommended on TIA's *Giving Made Easy* page, the website Good Shop is a shopping search engine that donates a percentage of each exchange to "charity." According to the *Oxford Dictionary of American English*, "charity" is commonly associated with "the voluntary giving of help, typically in the form of money, to those in need."¹⁵⁸ TIA urges parents to "make The Intown Academy your charity of choice!" This command is odd given the fact that the vast majority of TIA's families are themselves very near the US poverty line and, according to both Title I and TIA, are a population defined by "need." Though the economic poverty of TIA's Title I-identified families is cited by the school's charter documents as TIA's *raison d'être*, the school corrupts both this narrative and its self-identification as a "charity." The school's "charitable" mission—to prepare students "for the evolving world"—is a task elsewhere discursively constructed as the sole province of TIA and its corporate sponsors, necessitating the mandate for TIA's distinctive parent/student discipline.¹⁵⁹ However, in this iteration TIA exhorts those families (whose children—as student-subjects—are ostensibly the objects of the school's

charity) to perform acts of charity in which *the school itself* is the recipient of charitable giving by isolating parents' daily spending practices to engagement with specific corporations: a practice that earns money for TIA *and* for corporations, while exacerbating the economic riskiness of TIA's subjects. TIA's invitation of its parent-subjects, who are discursively configured as "objects-of-charity," to make TIA their "charity of choice," enlists these subjects to perform privilege by incurring debt and, thus, increasing their economic riskiness. Fundamental to TIA's discursive construction of parent-subjects, risk—of the parent, the student, or even of the school—is the catalyst of parental responsabilization. Indeed, as both a potential threat and a potential boon to student and school, parents must allow TIA's discipline to hone their behaviors in all contexts, even in their homes.

3.4 The Praxis of Daily Life: School Discipline at Home

The Family and Student Contracts stipulate that their respective subjects will check for "home enrichment assignments throughout the week" and ensure that "there is a quiet area" in the home for students to do their assignments. Though the merits of a quiet study-space are undoubtedly significant, TIA's contractual mandate for such a space in the home (and the threat of student-expulsion due to non-compliance) formally codifies the home and the family as threats which must be (re)configured by school discipline. Given this discursive framework, students' ambiguously-titled "home enrichment assignments" may connote not only the enrichment of the student's education, but the "enrichment" of the home itself, as it is increasingly articulated by school discipline. The contradictory acknowledgement of responsibility that initiates the contracts—in which parents and students are both most responsible for students' education—is recapitulated in TIA's mandate that parents and students ensure that there is "a quiet area" available in the home. One may presume that young

students—such as the kindergarten-aged students who sign the contract—do not have the resources/abilities necessary to effect spatial divisions within the home, which following Foucault, is commonly configured as a site of adult male power and discipline.¹⁶⁰ Though parents presumably govern the behaviors in the space (and spaces) of the home, TIA's mandate for a family home in which a child may be quietly isolated is founded upon a classist presumption of home-life that is potentially incommensurate with the realities of working-class single-parent homes. This discursive (re)iteration of familial threat perpetuates TIA's production of parents as sites of risk necessitating the permeation of school discipline into their personal spaces and practices. To this end, the student-subject is called upon to infuse the home with TIA's brand of scholastic discipline, whereas parents are positioned as facilitators obeisant to the exigencies of the student-subject's task.

TIA's reconfiguration of the family maintains popular notions of parental responsibility to the child—of securing and maintaining the child's well-being—while diminishing the salience of parental authority through the "equal" allotment of responsibility to both students and parents. This mutual responsabilization is evident in the contractual requirement that students "read (or have [their] parents read to [them]) for a minimum of 20 minutes per day, 4 days per week."¹⁶¹ TIA's requirement for parental availability is grounded in a regulatory classist presumption which, like the presumption of the student's ability to control parental behavior, reifies familial risk and redistributes power/authority to the school. The subjective reorientation signified by Baez and Talburt's aforementioned phrase, *in loco scholasticus*—which the authors coin in reference to the US Department of Education's (DOE) responsabilization of parents—becomes, in the discourse of TIA's contracts, uniquely threatening. Clearly, TIA's accession to arbiter and disciplinarian of the family home is

consistent with Baez and Talburt's description of the US DOE's goals to "utilize the parent-child relationship" in its neoliberal projects of parent/student subjectification.¹⁶² TIA employs the DOE's tactics but with a flexibility (and authority) uncommon to traditional public schools (TPS). Whereas the insinuation of TPS-discipline into families' homes (and relationships) is catalyzed by the threat of inefficacious education due to parental irresponsibility, in TIA's contractual discourse this regulatory anxiety is accompanied by the material threat of expulsion. Enabled by TIA's APS-granted flexibility, the threat of expulsion due to contractual non-compliance not only provides TIA with the power to eliminate students whose grades will not be an asset to the CRCT-obeisant school, but reifies the school's discursive construction of personally responsible subjects whose survival depends upon their internalization (and performance) of school norms.

The subjects of TIA are constituted within a matrix of threat: the threat of failing schools, of risky family/culture, and the threat of being bound to these through expulsion. Given the extraction of family resources facilitated by the Family and Student Contracts, this subjectifying matrix is a discursively constructed, flexible factory: producing not merely material capital, but socio-cultural and institutional power. As families continue to be articulated by TIA's disciplinary mandates, the matrix of threat is reified, as is TIA's construction of itself as the sole provider of evolutionary rigor through education. Repeated consistently, this mutual-construction of risk and opportunity consolidates power not in the hands of families in need but in the hands of the producers of risk. It is this subtle reproduction of oppressive systems of power in the guise of social uplift that threatens US schools and their local communities.

3.5 Conclusion

Crisis is a fecund medium. Wielded expertly, narratives of crisis can produce significant social and institutional change. The "crisis" of US public education at the end of the twentieth century was produced to a significant degree by the second Bush administration's implementation of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), a federal program which mandated that schools demonstrate 100 percent reading proficiency by 2014. When they fail to accomplish this impossible task, public schools are closed and often turned over to private Education Management Organizations (EMOs) to be reopened as charter schools, despite the much-contested efficacy of charter schools in practice. Importantly, both NCLB and the Obama administration's re-branded reproduction, Race to the Top (RTTT), have both weakened TPS through their myopic dependence on standardized testing and their increasing support of charter schools. As I illustrated in the first chapter, though both programs claim to support socio-economically underprivileged populations, their effects on educational efficacy have been questionable at best and often, utterly corrosive. However, their effects on the institutional practice of education in the US have been incredibly productive. The rise in the popularity of charter schools as "solutions" to the crisis of public education has resulted in the expenditure of incredible amounts of money federally and locally, not on education generally, but on education legislation supporting charter schools and on charter schools themselves, as was indicated by the millions of dollars of pro-charter funding received from out-of-state business-people such as the Koch brothers and Alice Walton under the banner of Families for Better Public Schools (FBPS).¹⁶³ Produced and "confirmed" by the conspicuous corrosion of US public schools under NCLB and RTTT, the "crisis" of education is met by "concerned families" who, despite inconclusive results, proffer charter schools as a solution. Of course, as the debate over

Georgia's Amendment One indicates, the monetary cache signified by "concerned families" is comprised primarily of donations from opportunistic philanthropists following the example of Bill Gates who, forced to pay billions of dollars in fines for Microsoft's illegal business practices, "told the BBC that the long court battles made him see the need to exert greater influence over government and the public sector."¹⁶⁴ Writing in 2011, Klonsky notes that "the federal attorney who prosecuted and finally settled the Microsoft case in the U.S. was none other than Joel Klein, a Broad Fellow and now the chancellor of the nation's largest school district, New York City Public Schools, which currently receives more than \$100 million in Gates and Broad funding."¹⁶⁵ Klein, whose unethical use of public resources to promote private pro-charter school groups was exposed in 2012,¹⁶⁶ now runs the education division of Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation. As Klein's vocational trajectory indicates, despite the highly-contested narrative posing charter schools as a "solution" to the public education "crisis," the practice (and politics) of charter school-based education reform *is extremely effective* at consolidating power amongst a monied-elite.

As I have demonstrated in the preceding chapters, national narratives of crisis as techniques of social reorientation are recapitulated locally within the discourse of individual charter schools. In the case of TIA, the narrative of charter schools as a "solution" to the "crisis" of a failing public education system is coupled with a localized evocation of specific socio-economic populations in crisis. According to TIA's discursive construction of itself and its subjects, the Title I-identified families of the Old Fourth Ward are a population in need of a charter school option or, more specifically, of an education that is predicated upon corporate-partnership and that promises an "opportunity" for students to participate in globalization. Juxtaposing its socio-economically underprivileged parent/student population with evocations of

world-citizenship through corporatization, TIA discursively positions itself as a vital suture connecting the cultural and economic poverty of the local to the cultural and economic wealth signified by globalization. Both TIA and its offer of the "opportunity" to participate in globalization are discursively presented as benevolent responses to the "crisis" of poverty afflicting the Old Fourth Ward. Yet, the diagnosis of Old Fourth Ward families as in "crisis" is deeply inflected by the rapid gentrification of the neighborhood and, as the school's charter petition clearly indicates, TIA configures itself as a technology of this gentrification. Despite TIA's discursive self-presentation as benevolent responder to crisis, it is apparent that the school is complicit in the very process of gentrification which diagnoses the socio-economically underprivileged population of the Old Fourth Ward as being in crisis. The ascription of "crisis" to these populations is implicitly a condemnation of those cultural practices/expressions which are deemed incompatible with revitalization. Seen in this light, TIA's subjectification of parents and students—the erasure of the home from the student's body through mandates for uniforms, the reconfiguration of the home and family according to school discipline, demands for labor, and prescriptions for proper spending—seems less pertinent to educational efficacy and more attuned to the production of subjects according to the exigencies of gentrification. Furthermore, inflected by this gentrifying condemnation of the local, TIA's valorization of globalization implies that globalization itself is the ultimate act of gentrification which students' must learn to desire and enact if they are going to survive.

In my critical discourse analysis of TIA's various documents and media, I have attempted to articulate the school's subjectifying narratives and to analyze how these narratives function to (re)produce particular subjects. Identifying these subjects, I have then considered the discrepancies between their material and discursive situation(s) in an attempt to better understand

how they might be effected/affected by the practice of education at TIA. Though many education reformers look to test scores alone as rubrics of a school's success or failure, I have chosen to refuse such an analytic frame. Instead, I have found it most valuable to consider how TIA's discourse works to produce subjects. I have avoided the presumption of what "successful" education might look like, which has allowed me to consider what education means in the context of TIA (and, to a significant degree, charter schools broadly) and how this meaning is constructed and (re)inforced within the discourse of the school.

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⁹⁰ “The Intown Academy Charter Petition,” 15.

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⁹³ “The Intown Academy Dedicates Peace Garden For International Day Of Peace,” *Talk Up APS*, accessed July 3, 2014, <http://talkupaps.wordpress.com/2013/10/01/17292/>.

⁹⁴ As a technique of gentrification, TIA's progress narrative sutures the “disadvantaged” students of the Old Fourth Ward community to the community of gentrifiers represented by the business and political figures who appear at the playground-build discussed later in this chapter. This suturing divides the Old Forth Ward community into those marked for progress and those marked for disposal. This simultaneous invocation of community and positioning of subjects as “disposable” is an essential technique in the construction of the “slow life”/peonage that I discuss in Chapter Three.

⁹⁵ Nancy Lesko, *Act Your Age!: A Cultural Construction of Adolescence* (New York, NY: Routledge Falmer, 2001).

⁹⁶ “Parent-Student Handbook 2012-2013.” 3.

⁹⁷ TIA's partners include Ernst & Young, Alliance Française, Emory University, Atlanta Dream Center—MetroKidz, Renaissance Learning Center, Midtown Neighbors Association, Suntrust Bank, Hands On Atlanta, Alliance Francaise d'Atlanta, Walton Family Foundation, Georgia Department of Education, Atlanta Public Schools, Georgia Charter Schools Association, Georgia State University, EdisonLearning, Forth Ward Alliance, Forth Ward Neighbors, Central Atlanta Neighbors, Midtown Neighbors Association, Historic District Development Corporation, Ponce Park LLC, and Central Atlanta Progress.

This list of the school's partners indicates TIA's IB-inflected construction of world-citizenship via Alliance Française and Alliance Française d'Atlanta and its simultaneous assertion of locality via the various local businesses and neighborhood associations.

⁹⁸ "Quarterly News from The Intown Academy," accessed April 16, 2014,

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[Academy.html?soid=1102306392688&aid=upSM5HZiOho](http://myemail.constantcontact.com/Quarterly-News-from-The-Intown-Academy.html?soid=1102306392688&aid=upSM5HZiOho); "The Intown Academy Is

Participating in Georgia Gives!," accessed April 16, 2014,

<https://gagivesday.org/c/GGD/a/intownacademy>.

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[http://archives.gadoe.org/DMGetDocument.aspx/Intown%20Academy%20Charter.pdf?p=6CC6](http://archives.gadoe.org/DMGetDocument.aspx/Intown%20Academy%20Charter.pdf?p=6CC6799F8C1371F65B460C80FF380405E2DDA3108E02966A2AF913EB7021D8CF&Type=D)

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¹⁰⁰ Mimi Thi Nguyen, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

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¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 18.

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¹⁰⁷ Marc Richardson, March 11, and 2013 at 01:54 PM, "Eat Well While Helping Intown Academy Build a New Playground," *East Atlanta Patch*, accessed March 31, 2014, <http://eastatlanta.patch.com/groups/schools/p/eat-good-while-helping-intown-academy-build-a-new-playground>.

¹⁰⁸ "Atlanta Councilperson Kwanza Hall to Dedicate The Intown Academy Playground and Garden -- ATLANTA, April 16, 2013 /PRNewswire/ --," accessed March 31, 2014, <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/atlanta-councilperson-kwanza-hall-to-dedicate-the-intown-academy-playground-and-garden-203263951.html>.

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http://kaboom.org/about_kaboom/supporting_partners/partnerships/how_we_partner.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

FAMILY CONTRACT

The Intown Academy will provide a learning environment for all students that demands high educational standards and high levels of parent/guardian involvement and responsibility.

As a parent/guardian, I, (parent/guardian name) _____, am the person most responsible for my child's education. I will be a partner with The Intown Academy and my child in promoting his or her academic achievement and character development. I understand that for my child to attend this school, I must meet the responsibilities listed below. I know that there are other public school options in this attendance zone, and I have decided that a high level of parental involvement meets the needs of my family.

Parent / Guardian Responsibilities

1. I will abide by the uniform policy, thereby ensuring my child is dressed in the required Intown Academy Uniform every day that he/she attends school.
2. I will donate at least 5 hours per marking period (two parent families) or 2.5 hours per marking period (single parent families) of volunteer service to the school each school year.
3. I will participate in at least one fundraising event during the year.
4. I will know and reinforce school rules.
5. I will attend all required parent-teacher conferences; at minimum, I will participate in 2 planning meetings for my child's Individual Learning Plan per school year.
6. I will have my child at school, ready to learn each day by 7:30 am and I will follow all policies as outlined in the Atlanta Public Schools' Attendance Protocol
7. I will help my child learn by checking for home enrichment assignments throughout the week and by making sure there is a quiet area in my home for him or her to do their assignments.
8. I will read to or make sure that my child reads for a minimum of 20 minutes per day, 4 days per week.
9. I will review and immediately answer any messages that I get from my child's teacher. I will review, sign and return my child's courier each week as necessary.
10. I will report any illness or absence to the school and keep my child home if he or she is ill.
11. I will immediately inform the school as to any change in my child's transportation. I understand that this is necessary for the safety of my child.
12. I will let the **school administration and teacher know of any change in address, phone number, or family status for my child within 7 days. I will inform the school administration immediately if our family moves outside the Atlanta Public Schools attendance zone.**
13. I will meet all my financial obligations to the school (i.e. after-school fees, library fines, etc.) within the current school year. I understand that I may make arrangements for a payment plan and that it is my responsibility to contact the Principal or Bookkeeper to make arrangements if necessary. *(I understand that if I have outstanding debts to the school, I will not receive Report Cards or be able to have my child's records transferred to another school.)*

Parent/Guardian Rights

1. My child will learn in a safe and healthy environment.
2. My child's teacher will communicate with me regularly about my child's progress.
3. I will receive written goals, plans, curriculum, and behavioral standards for my child's classroom at the beginning of the school year.
4. I will have access to the Governing Board meeting agendas, meetings, and minutes.
5. I may serve on a committee or subcommittee of the Governing Board or in the Parent Teacher Organization (PTA or PTO).
6. I may give input on curriculum, leadership, and other decisions about the school.
7. I may give staff feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the school's program. This feedback includes filling out a survey at the end of the school year.

How The Intown Academy will be my partner

1. The Intown Academy will be flexible in setting up parent-teacher conferences so I can attend.
2. The Intown Academy will hold family meetings at different times to meet different family schedules.
3. The Intown Academy will offer me many kinds of volunteer opportunities to best link the talents and interests of my family with the needs of the school.
4. The Intown Academy will provide the schedule of school events and meetings in ample time for me to attend them.
5. The Intown Academy administration and staff will be available to meet if a family situation comes up that keeps me from meeting my obligations.

Statement of Understanding and Agreement

I, _____, understand that I must agree to all terms of this Family Contract in order to enroll my child at The Intown Academy. I understand that it is my responsibility to sign and return this **original** contract to the Registration Representative or the School Administration. I understand that if I do not live up to the terms of this contract, **my child may not be able to return to The Intown Academy.**

Please check one:

____ Two Parent/Guardian (5 volunteer hours per grading period)

____ Single Parent/Guardian (2.5 volunteer hours per grading period)

I agree to all terms of this contract (if two parent/guardian family-both must sign),

Parent or Guardian #1

PRINT Parent/Guardian Name Relationship to Student

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

Parent or Guardian #2

PRINT Parent/Guardian Name Relationship to Student

Parent/Guardian Signature Date

For The Intown Academy Use

Print Registration Representative Representative Signature Date

A copy of this contract will be available upon request from the parent or guardian

APPENDIX B

STUDENT CONTRACT

The Intown Academy will provide a learning environment for all students that demands high educational standards and high levels of parent/guardian involvement and responsibility.

As a student, I am the person most responsible for myself and my own education. I will be a partner with The Intown Academy. I understand that to attend this school, I must meet the responsibilities listed below.

Student Responsibilities

1. I will abide by the uniform policy, thereby dressing in the required Intown Academy Uniform every day that I am in attendance. I know that I will be dismissed from school should I come to school in anything other than the uniform.
2. I will participate in the required number of community service hours applicable for my grade level.
3. I will know and reinforce school rules.
4. I will arrive at school, be in my seat, and ready to learn each day by 7:30 am.
5. I will follow all policies as outlined in the Atlanta Public Schools' Attendance Protocol.
6. I will complete all homework and home enrichment assignments throughout the week; making sure there is a quiet area for me to do my assignments.
7. I will read (or have my parents read to me) for a minimum of 20 minutes per day, 4 days per week.
8. I will deliver all notes/messages/delinquency notices/graded tests/graded homework/invoices from my teacher to my parents/guardians and return signed documents as required.

Statement of Understanding and Agreement

I, , understand that I must agree to all terms of this Student Contract in order to remain enrolled at The Intown Academy. I understand that it is my responsibility to sign and return this **original** contract to the Registration Representative or the School Administration. I understand that if I do not live up to the terms of this contract, I may not be able to return to The Intown Academy.

I agree to all terms of this contract

Print Student Name Student Signature Date

For The Intown Academy Use

Print Registration Representative Representative Signature Date

A copy of this contract will be available to the parent/guardian upon request.
